Author:
Turner, Yvonne

Title:
Chinese postgraduate business students in the UK : a preliminary exploration of their experiences and learning development

Chinese postgraduate Business students in the UK: a preliminary exploration of their experiences and learning development

Yvonne Turner

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education in the Faculty of Education
July 2004

Word count: 45, 033

Abstract

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education in the Faculty of Education by Yvonne Turner

July 2004

Chinese postgraduate Business students in the UK: a preliminary exploration of their experiences and learning development

This dissertation aims to explore the experiences of a group of full-time postgraduate students from China while studying in the UK. It documents a small-scale, academic-year-long investigation of the living and working experiences of the group, from their arrival in Autumn 2001 until mid-2002. The paper attempts to draw from the existing literature an understanding of the degree to which the two education systems - Chinese and British - affect the students. Its primary aim is to explore how participants' UK learning experiences influence their pre-existing implicit theories of learning. The main conclusions are: participants' implicit theories of learning conform closely to Chinese student profiles that emerge from the literature; their implicit theories remain largely intact after one academic year in the UK; their initial openness to a different learning context is affected by limited opportunities to penetrate tacit UK academic conventions and social and emotional isolation.

Acknowledgements and Declaration

Acknowledgements

Primary thanks go to the students who participated in the project. They unstintingly gave up time from demanding schedules, and worked their way through the difficult questions and topics we explored together with open and enquiring minds. I would like particularly to acknowledge the support of Professor Marilyn Osborn, who patiently supervised this project through delays, false-starts and much trepidation. I appreciate the very helpful comments and encouragement she has given me since I began the EdD programme. Thanks also to Jacqui Upcott and the EdD team for speedy advice and information whenever I contacted Berkeley Square. Finally, special personal appreciation goes to the folks at home, Amy and Fritz, who stoically put up with my worst days and always encourage me in my best. Friends are what matter most in life. And thank goodness for mine!

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the university of Bristol.

The thesis has not been presented to any other university for examination in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed.....

Date.....17/11/04.....

Chinese postgraduate Business students in the UK: a preliminary exploration of their experiences and learning development

Table of contents

Chapter one: Introduction

Setting the scene: Chinese students and internationalism in the UK educational community

Universities in Britain have long been multicultural, multiethnic communities, both within the domestic student body and with a membership of scholars drawing from a broad range of overseas nations. In spite of this historically-consistent diversity, however, the international contingent - especially outside the elite group of graduate research students - remained relatively small for most of the twentieth century. During this time, the overwhelming majority population among students and academics was domestic, mainly white British. Teaching policies and practices in universities tended to develop in ways that reflected the needs of that constituency, therefore, and stemmed from the patterning of the selective British education system of the early-mid twentieth centuries (Scott, 1995, Barnett, 1997). Recent changes in the system of UK Higher Education (HE) funding and expansion of the sector, however, have increasingly encouraged universities and colleges to look towards overseas students both as a source of revenue and as a way of broadening the cultural diversity of the university community (Humfrey 1999). International students have grown not only in numbers but also in the range of their countries of origin. Moreover, an increasingly entrepreneurial, 'managerialist' emphasis to the running and organization of universities (Deem, 1998, Leslie and Slaughter, 1997), has brought with it more active, commercial International Marketing practices aimed at potential applicants (Kinnell, 1990). This has led to the rapid development of university International Offices, whose role is to meet the challenge of recruiting new students from a wide variety of backgrounds world-wide, while maintaining departments' specific academic standards (Mortimer, 1997).

The challenge to maintain student numbers became even more pressing after 1997 when a number of long-term sources of international student revenue – the rapidly-developing economic powerhouses of Asia – collapsed under the weight of regional economic crisis (Gough 1998). At the same time, shifts in UK government policy restructured central HE funding, prompting the need to further increase numbers of

full-fee-paying international students to support dwindling levels of grant (Hodges, 2001). UK universities and colleges began looking to newer markets, therefore, and China - with the largest population in the world and a dynamic, developing economy - emerged as an attractive replacement for old post-colonial catchments.

Chinese students studying internationally

It is not new for Chinese students to seek overseas study in large numbers. Pre-Republican China had a long tradition of sending its young people abroad for an international education (Hayhoe 1996). Dr Sun Yat-Sen, Deng Xiao-Ping and other national revolutionary leaders benefited from education in the USA, Japan, France or the UK (Hayhoe 1996, He et al 1998, Sang 1998). With the closing-off of China during the 1960s, however, the situation changed dramatically. Academic exchange was limited to small numbers among the party elite who were able to travel to the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries to receive technical or political education. The beginning of the reform process in 1978 altered that picture again, and the 1980s and 1990s saw huge increases in the numbers of students seeking degrees in Europe and the USA. In the late 1990s, British universities were happy to meet that demand, and numbers of Chinese students arriving in the UK increased markedly. As a result, they have become a significant ethnic group among the diversity of international students in the UK. In 2002 (20/3/02), the *People's Daily* reported that 80,000 Chinese students would sit the IELTS exam of English language proficiency (used as a language proficiency indicator for entry to, for example, UK universities) a 100% increase over the 40,000 of 2001, indicating a potentially surging interest on the part of Chinese nationals for anglophone HE. UK figures suggest that in excess of 25,000 Chinese students were participating in HE in 2002/03, a more than 70% increase on the levels of 2001/02 (Economist, 2003a; Blackstone, 2004).

Educational diversity in Britain: the implications for educational quality

There is no doubt that an increase in the number of full-fee paying Chinese students in UK HE has made a positive contribution to the financial health of many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK. Nonetheless, there are a range of issues that attend this increase in numbers, arising both within and without the lecture rooms.

that have the potential to influence the quality of students' educational experience. Life as an international student in Britain is not always easy (McNay, 1996; Humfrey, 1999). A body of literature has developed over a number of years documenting the challenges experienced by international students in the UK HE system, both in the fulfillment of their initial expectations of the university experience and in their ability to perform. **Appendix one** outlines key issues within this literature affecting international students in the UK, with an assessment of the potential implications for the current project. Many of the issues affecting overseas students, however, impinge on a basic approach to academic equality in UK HE. It also questions the extent to which both the institutions and the people within them are aware of or equipped to ensure that culturally-different student groups receive real equality of access to the apparent educational opportunity. A range of reports have noted the UK's declining global share of the international student market – perhaps reflecting perceptions about multi-cultural insensitivity in UK institutions compared to other global players (THES, 2000; Economist 2003 a, b; Blackstone, 2004). Nonetheless, in spite of these concerns, the numbers of students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) has continued to rise, making them the largest single-ethnic group represented among international students in UK HE (Economist, 2003a). As such, PRC students constitute a large and important constituency within the university community as a whole, and one whose participation is likely to have considerable influence in shaping the teaching and learning dynamic shared by everyone in the classroom.

In order to understand the needs of Chinese students effectively as a foundation for enabling provision, therefore, it is useful to consider the extent to which the teaching and learning process in the UK and in China might be influenced by their respective national cultures and to explore the consequences for student experience as individuals proceed through their courses of study. An investigation of the contribution which students' expectations and previous educational experiences may have on their overall perceptions and performance when they study in UK HE might also contribute to a wider evaluation. Within this framework there are a number of areas to consider. For example, what has been termed a learner's 'implicit theory' of learning - the way in which previous learning experiences within the formal educational context influence attitudes and behaviours when students encounter new

learning environments (Claxton 1996; Light and Cox, 2001). Such an investigation might be especially illuminating when examining learners' perceptions as they move across cultures and has the potential to reveal useful insights about both a practical and philosophical level.

The scope and contribution of the dissertation

This dissertation aims to explore the experiences of a group of full-time postgraduate (PG) students from China who have come to study in the UK as part of the contemporary community of Chinese scholars living and working in Britain. It documents a small-scale, academic-year-long investigation of the living and working experiences of the group, from their arrival in Autumn 2001 until mid 2002, when they were nearing the end of their study period. The paper attempts to draw from the existing literature an understanding of the degree to which the two education systems - Chinese and British - have impacted on the students in the past and during their current studies and explores the ways in which their perceptions of similarities and differences may have an impact on their behaviour in the UK learning environment.

The impetus for the work derives from my own professional experiences, as an academic who has worked both in China and the UK. After spending three and a half years in China in the late 1990s, coordinating the delivery of a British Business degree programme and teaching in State universities in Beijing, I returned to the UK at a point when large numbers of students from mainland China were beginning to participate in UK-based study for the first time. My experiences of working with students in China, however, seemed to contrast significantly with the accounts of colleagues in Britain. Their stories of Chinese students in the classroom described them as passive, struggling to meet the conventions and expectations of the UK system. My own experiences in China had been that, while some students struggled with making the learning transition to UK-style study, nonetheless students had generally been active, engaged and had achieved academic results above the normal distribution of cohorts of their UK counterparts. As I became increasingly involved in education development projects focusing on internationalization and responsible for teaching cohorts that were largely people by international (predominantly

Chinese) students, I determined to explore these apparent contradictions in perception and experience in a more systematic manner.

In terms of a contribution to educational theorizing, the study is potentially useful in a number of ways. First, within the project, the conceptualization of the educational experience was necessarily drawn broadly. It included discussion with the students about any aspect of their lives which they felt had some bearing on their understanding of what constituted education and influenced their day-to-day experience of teaching and learning. This wide conceptualization of teaching and learning was essential given the cross-cultural nature of the work and the potential to miss valuable insights through drawing too narrow a boundary around the discussions. based on theorizing which derived from a specific (UK) cultural context. It contributes, therefore, to a developing theoretical understanding of differences that may exist in conceptualizations of learning in Chinese and British contexts. The broad scope of the project also contributed to understanding of academic practice in British universities. A second focus within its scope, deriving from my contrasting experiences in China and the UK, was as personal and professional reflection for me, both as researcher and as an academic working in a UK university. Maintaining an open and exploratory framework for the project enabled that reflection and allowed the emergence of participants' own agenda of themes and concerns without the imposition of my own academic preconceptions. This perspective facilitated deeper reflective opportunities for me as a result. Finally, the overall results of the study are likely to be most clearly seen in the richness of the information obtained about the thoughts, orientation and motivation to learning that the participants revealed in their conversations throughout the year. These insights documented not only the explicit personal experiences of the individuals but, through the longitudinal nature of the work, enabled analysis of the profundity of any changes in their conceptions of learning, and its implications for understanding the notion of implicit theories in a cross-cultural context.

The organization of the work

The structure of the dissertation follows a conventional pattern. It begins with a discussion of the literature, setting the educational context for Chinese and British

education and exploring existing educational theory from which the analysis and discussion of the results of the project might draw. The following chapter sets out the methodological approach to the study in some detail and discusses the practical issues and limitations that affected the conduct of the work. Following chapters then proceed to present the project's outcomes and to discuss its findings in the light of the theoretical notions introduced in the literature review, attempting to draw some critical insights and commentary about the novel aspects of the work. Finally the concluding chapter draws together the main themes and issues that have provided the project's contours and builds in my own personal reflections about the project and its possible influences on my future teaching and learning. This chapter also discusses the possible scope for future developments of the work, anticipates opportunities for further research projects based on the findings from the current study and makes brief commentary on the main limitations.

Chapter 2: Using the literature to set frameworks for the project

Introduction

As set out in chapter one, this study attempted to explore how a small group of students from mainland China experienced HE in the UK and how their interactions in that particular academic context influenced their evolving perspectives on education and learning. In order to contextualise this exploration in the literature, it is important to begin by grounding our understanding of educational practices primarily in China - the students' previous learning environment - and in the UK.

Historically, much of the literature about Chinese education has tended to focus on general characterizations of the education system or descriptions of the formalities of teaching and learning dynamics and provides less information about individual student experiences within the learning process, the main focus for the current project (for examples see Hayhoe, 1996; Bai, 2000; Chen 1999; Lin, 1993). At the same time, in exploring such contextual literature it is possible to develop some insights into the personal frames of reference with which Chinese students might come to Britain and understand in more detail the context in which they lived as students. It is also possible to distil broad themes or characteristics within a notional student 'learning profile' to explore how far study participants met the expectations that the literature excites. Inevitably, the extent to which factors drawn from such general contexts influence any particular individual is likely to be diffuse and ambiguous. If nothing else, however, discussion of existing research about two education systems provides an opportunity for 'dialogue' between the information yielded from the current research project and the literature already in the field. Nonetheless, within the scope of this dissertation it is impossible to fully reflect the wide range of contextual literature, either about Chinese or British education. Earlier work investigating education in China (Turner and Acker 2002) establishes more of the context in greater detail than the permissible scope of the current project.

The organization of the chapter

This chapter draws out a number of themes to provide background to the project's outcomes. It begins by setting the context for the two education systems in which the students have studied, China and Britain. The focus for the Chinese section of the chapter draws on defining the contemporary Chinese education environment and discusses Chinese notions of learning and learners, whilst reflecting the predominance of macro-level structural education research in China, as mentioned above. The focus for the following section in the chapter places more emphasis on UK-based theories of learning and learners in HE. The chapter develops with an assessment of the emergent similarities and contrasts between the two education environments and attempts to draw out research themes for later discussion by exploring the expectations a 'typical' Chinese student (drawn from the literature) might have of HE and the ways in which such a student might conform to a construct of a 'typical' student from the perspective of Anglo-Saxon theories about teaching and learning.

Characterizing the Chinese teaching and learning style and space: teaching and learning dynamics

The focus of the existing literature: ethnic Chinese and the PRC

China has a long and almost unbroken history of educational development, stretching over more than 2000 years (Hawkins, 1983; Hayhoe, 1984; Zhaowu et al, 1998). Within its constitution and practice, indigenous educational traditions continue to play an important part in the shaping of teaching and learning practices and academic conventions. The main focus for this section of the chapter, however, is China's contemporary educational environment. To contextualise the study and briefly explore key historical themes within Chinese education, **appendix two** makes a short assessment of China's education development, as a supplement to the main discussion in the chapter.

As noted above, though a relatively large number of studies exist discussing macro-level policy and practice within Chinese education, by comparison few more intimate pictures of day-to-day learning are available to provide insights about Chinese learners themselves. More work exists which draws on education within the Hong

Kong or Taiwanese context, for example (see examples in Biggs and Watkins. 1996 and 2001) or other environments populated by the Chinese diaspora: the so-called Confucian-Heritage cultures. In considering the patterns of teaching and learning in mainland China, however, it is important to recognize contextual differences between classifications of ethnic 'Chinese' and practices in the PRC itself. For example. international influences are historically more embedded in both Hong Kong and Taiwan than has been the case in mainland China. International universities are well-established in both locations, populated with international academics, in a recognized international context. Schools in Hong Kong have been modeled to some extent on the British system and remain profoundly different to those in mainland China, even after unification in 1997. International travel has also long been permissible for citizens from both Hong Kong and Taiwan - a contrast to the PRC which remained substantially closed to outside contacts until 1978 and later. These factors together have facilitated a dynamic educational interchange that did not begin to develop in mainland China until very recently. As noted in **appendix one**, many academics in the PRC do not possess internationally-recognizable academic credentials, an inheritance of the educational disruption of the Cultural Revolution years. Ph.D. degrees were only introduced in 1982, following legislation in 1980 (New Star, 1996) and it remains extremely difficult to study for a Ph.D. in China on a part-time basis, for example, which seriously limits the number of people eligible for advanced study. In a general sense, travel for Chinese citizens, at home and abroad, together with academic exchange, was severely restricted by the government until the mid-1990s, and it can remain difficult today for prospective students to obtain the necessary permissions for passports and travel documents in spite of recent reductions in travel controls. The practical mechanics of domestic / international academic flows in the PRC, therefore, have been severely inhibited.

The influence of politics

More profoundly, the educational consequences of 54 years of Socialist government cannot be ignored in the shaping of the education system and of the everyday teaching and learning dynamic. Education is designed to be socially normative within the country, a cornerstone of the country's economic modernization policies (Goldman, 1981; Ho, 1986; SEC, 1996; Li, 1994). Politics remains an overt feature of curriculum and classroom, with political 'monitors' present within each cohort and

institution, whose responsibility is to regulate and report on the political behaviour of the students and teachers in the classroom (Turner and Acker, 2002). Political and civic education also has a strong influence on the curriculum as a whole, determining which subjects are favoured by students (Sciences, not Humanities for higher study, for example) and how assessment and progression is managed.

Cultural and psychological constructions of learning

On a psychological level, research also suggests differences in how people in the PRC construct ideas about knowledge, learning, education and a number of other related concepts compared to other ethnic Chinese societies. In one large psycho-linguistics study, Szalay et al (1994) conducted comparative work in China, Taiwan and the USA, examining underlying language constructions for a number of everyday-life concepts. Differences between Chinese and Taiwanese constructs of knowledge identified by the study are particularly illuminating. In China, knowledge constructs are related to ideas about power and study/ hard work, focused highly on achievement. Knowledge is regarded as 'an abundant accumulated treasure.' (p.212). People in Taiwan, on the other hand, espouse a more classically Confucianist view that knowledge combines with personal wisdom and gifts, with a consequent de-emphasis on hard work and study in comparison to ideas expressed in mainland China. It is important, therefore, to treat much of the existing educational research about "Chinese" learning with some caution because of a tendency to classify all ethnic Chinese societies as similar, underestimating the important influence of political context.

Other philosophical issues must also be taken into account. For example, the identification of approaches to learning is an important area in which many "western" commentators have classified Chinese learning without fully embracing the contextual influences. The characterization of the 'rote learning' culture in China (Cleverly, 1991; Chan and Drover, 1996) is one example of this. Discussed more fully below, it is important to assert the contextual role that meditative, memory-based approaches to learning possess within traditional culture in China as a means of achieving deeper learning. Nonetheless, in the context of western constructs of learning, rote learning is often ascribed as an indicator of a surface approach (for example, Ramsden, 1992). The application of these culturally-articulated

characterizations of learning is somewhat difficult and can result in the production of a research stereotype which can give only a limited insight into a Chinese learning environment at best (Mok et al, 2001).

One of the key emphases of the current study is to attempt to explore constructions of learning held by a group of mainland Chinese students and to illuminate the development of their approaches to learning in a more intimate and insider-focused manner than has commonly appeared in the literature about Chinese learners to date. The fraught nature of cross-cultural research, however, is complicated in this case by the numerous cultural contexts which play a part in the project: personal, institutional, national, ethnic etc. In this context, it is especially important to attempt to learn the lessons of the cultural stereotypes that have often resulted from similar kinds of work in the past. Any theorizing that emerges from the study, therefore, will emphasise richness of depiction rather than generalisability and will seek to provide insightful impressions rather than to engender any inappropriate hard and fast pictures about how all Chinese people learn.

The Chinese classroom

Taking into account the important strictures about stereotyping above, the starting point for the study remains a consideration of the ways in which a group of students from China approach learning. It seems sensible, therefore, to draw out from the literature some impression of the teaching and learning space which Chinese students are likely to have inhabited before arriving in Britain. From a practical viewpoint, this discussion is divided into two sections: a descriptive account, taken from the literature of the teaching and learning context in China, supplemented by discussion of the themes and issues extrapolated from that contextual work. The descriptive account focuses largely on urban education - the environment featuring most heavily in the literature and which reflects the urban emphasis of much education in China. Rural provision tends to be patchier in scope, often lower quality and with either much larger or much smaller class sizes (depending on the catchment area of the school) than in urban schools (Tsui, 1998; Lin, 1993; Epstein, 1988; Henze, 1984; World Bank, 1997; State Education Commission, 1992-1997; Chinese Ministry of Education, 2003). Adherence to the national curriculum appears relatively constant, but less than 50% of students follow on to junior high school across the country as a

whole (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2003). Much of this decrease in numbers occurs in the countryside. Girls, in particular, tend to receive very little education in the countryside and constitute the majority of illiterates (Epstein, 1988; Henze. 1984; Min, 1995; Hannum, 1999; Kipnis, 1997; Chinese ministry of Education, 2003).

Inside the classroom

Formal education in China begins for children when they are approximately 6-7 years old (Chinese Ministry of Education 2003). Some children receive pre-school education, primarily children of parents who work for large state-owned organizations, but pre-school provision is not universal. Schools tend to be located within neighbourhood areas and children go to the elementary school nearest to their home. After that, their progression depends on performance: able students find places at more elite institutions (boarding is quite common at selective schools), while the majority go to either local general high schools or vocational schools and colleges.

The school environment described in much of the literature is formal and disciplined, teacher-centred and didactic (Reed, 1988; Cleverly, 1991; Leung, 1991; Chen, 1999; Cortazzi and Jin, 2001). Chinese teachers have a reputation as authoritarian (Ho, 2001) but corporal punishment is not commonly employed as a means of discipline. Instead, verbal punishments and detentions to 'shame' students appear to be more common. At elementary levels, the curriculum focuses on the acquisition of key basic skills and the development of social and classroom discipline. The approach to a unitarist, factual construction of knowledge is established early - questions and criticisms of knowledge content or methods are not tolerated (Turner and Acker, 2002).

The system conforms essentially to a national curriculum, but with some local variations in content. Basic skills - reading, numeracy and writing - figure strongly in the curriculum up to the end of high school, partially owing to the inherent complexity of the Chinese language. Extensive memorization exercises make up large volumes of unassessed homework from early years in school. At high school and beyond approximately two thirds of students follow the *like* subjects (science and maths, including engineering and medicine) and one third follow *wenke* (humanities) (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2003). English language - usually taught in Chinese

by the translation method, with a focus on grammar and reading - is a compulsory subject in the college entrance examinations for all students (Zhao and Campbell, 1995; Flowerdew et al, 2000; Min, 1995).

In spite of classroom formality, however, teachers and students engage in friendly and sometimes close relationships. Parents tend to be highly involved in children's education throughout school years and into university (Ho, 1986; Zhu, 1999; Economist, a, b, 2003). Discussions about student performance and welfare between family and teachers occur regularly and the teacher has a role as personal mentor as well as educator and disciplinarian (Biggs and Watkins, 2001; Ho, 2001). This construction of the teacher's role correlates not only with Confucian notions of teacher and student as sage and disciple but also to the communitaire socialist idea that education takes place within the local neighbourhood and is concerned about the formation of social and political character as much as individual cognitive development (Partington, 1988; Lee 1996). Civic and moral education and the governance of personal behaviour are strong themes featuring in the typical Chinese student's education career.

In spite of high levels of community involvement and support provided by teachers and parents (or perhaps because of them), many Chinese students do not regard their schooling positively. The highly competitive dynamic of the classroom and the scarcity of available places at 'good' high schools or at universities, means that the education process for Chinese students is highly pressurized - "like stuffing a duck"(Turner and Acker 2002, p.110). When confronted with high school and college entrance examinations, which are extremely competitive, for example, student suicides are not uncommon. The Chinese government has initiated many campaigns to attempt to address this problem, but the popular view remains that education correlates strongly with future career success and will bring security not only to the student but to their family (Economist, 2003 a, b). In spite of high levels of homework and oral classroom testing by teachers, written examinations form the main formal assessment and take place mid- and end-of-semester, with large set-piece examinations marking progression from one educational stage to another. Student performance lists are posted, resulting in class rankings and, in middle- and high-school, class streaming according to ability. All assessment, therefore, is individually

undertaken and group working is practically unknown, with the limited exception of laboratory or practical work undertaken in vocational post-compulsory institutions. where the competitive assessment emphasis is moderated and the acquisition of practical skills takes its place. The majority of students complete their education at the end of middle school (14 / 15 years of age), or high school (18 / 19) in the cities and elementary school (12/13) in the countryside (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2003)

Drawing from the literature: insights into Chinese cultural constructs of learning

The Chinese education paradox

Drawing on the sketch of the Chinese education system above and the historical account shown at **appendix one**, it is possible to develop some insights into cultural practices and constructs of teaching and learning likely to influence students who come to Britain to study. Much of the literature about education in China remains firmly descriptive. As noted above, however, implied in some of the studies are insights into the ways in which educational system, policy and practice may influence how individual students approach the learning process. Drawing on this aspect of the literature is most likely to be useful to the current study. The overall picture of teaching and learning in China, both contemporary and historic, however, remains patchy and impressionistic.

It is also important to re-emphasise here the intellectual paradox that lies at the heart of contemporary Chinese education. On the one hand, the Communist revolution in the 1940s sought to overthrow the last vestiges of the Confucian inheritance, especially in intellectual and political life (Chen 1974; Hawkins, 1974; Kobayashi, 1976). Nonetheless, many Confucianist influences have remained traceably within Chinese education through neglect or lack of resources or were, in fact, compounded by Maoist interpretations of knowledge and learning that developed in the early years of the PRC (Pepper, 1991; Leung, 1995; Fu, 1996; Chen, 1994; Chen, 1999). As a result, Chinese education exhibits a curious dichotomy in the relationship between policy and practice, resulting in a dynamic tension in practical approaches to teaching and learning. This is epitomized by the vestiges of the persistent 'red-expert' debate, discussed in **appendix one**, which polarizes socio-political credentials and intellectual

life (Hawkins, 1983; Acker, 1991). It certainly creates a picture of a teaching and learning inheritance which is potentially fraught with difficulties for students. Learning and its products are at one and the same time intended to leave a student emotionally untouched in their substance and yet involve tremendous intellectual and emotional engagement in their acquisition.

The pre-Socialist tradition

As part of this wider picture, Chinese traditional views about learning, stemming from Confucian philosophy and ethics, equate learning very strongly with knowledge - that is, the acquisition of factual and tangible information in the form of some kind of cognitive taxonomy (Fu, 1996; Lee, 1996; Allinson, 1989). There is also strong traditional value placed upon conventional 'wisdom', which is often gendered as male and associated with age (China has a long tradition of male gerontocracy) (Szalay et al, 1994). The religious practices of Buddhism and popularly-practised Confucianist ethics have also tended to drive a certain meditative aspect to the learning process (Biggs and Watkins, 2001). This is linked to a strong theme similar to the 'stages of development' notion prevalent in Western educational psychology through the middle of the twentieth century (Erikson, 1965; Valentine, 1956). Ideas about institutional learning and its outcomes, therefore, tended to assert that learning is formal, mainly about acquiring propositional knowledge, should be open to all and is to be pursued during an individual's youth. While procedural knowledge, such as it is explicit in Chinese education (mainly confined to learning techniques and structures), follows on in linear fashion from the propositional in the way that Bruner (1996) discusses the learning that flows from didacticism. More reflective and insightful aspects of the learning process tend to be associated with informal spiritual or meditative practices and develop only for some people as a result of concentrated discipline and over the course of a lifetime.

Such elitist views have tended to encourage the idea that conventional formal education is aimed exclusively at young people (Chinese Ministry of Planning, 2003, shows that only 0.14% of applications for HE come from those over age twenty-five in 2002) and is characterized by instrumental learning - a ritual progress through certain educational milestones which are unlikely to have an intrinsic impact on one's life but are more of extrinsic value, a passport to social status and the potential to

engage with deeper, individual learning later in life. The notion of transformational learning within the formal process, therefore, is relatively unknown within traditional Chinese education. The other characteristic that this particular aspect of Confucianism confers is that learning and study equates with labour - it is about hard work and disciplined concentration from the student irrespective of their intrinsic intellectual gifts (Zhaowu, 1998). Any lack of success in education and learning, therefore, tends to be regarded as the result of a lack of effort and not necessarily the absence of cognitive gifts.

Another aspect of the Confucian teaching and learning model which has passed relatively unchanged into contemporary Chinese ideas about learning is the role and characterization of the teacher. Practical education in China remains strongly teacher-centred, in spite of central modernizing and development efforts (Cortazzi and Jin, 2001; Meissner, 1995; New Star, 1996). Responsibility for the success of the teaching and learning process, therefore, lies very much with the educator, relegating the student to the role of disciple or acolyte seeking to gain wisdom from one who is more enlightened. It also tends to encourage the student to place a disciple's faith in the teacher and trust that some enlightened 'destination' will be achieved. In this way, it is not necessary for the student to understand what the end will be but to be patient and await insights to be revealed as a result of hard work given to assignments set by the teacher - stereotyped as student passivity in much of the literature (Biggs and Watkins, 2001). This highlights the both the progressional notion of learning within this construct and reinforces the correlation between effort and achievement. Students work very hard and with great concentration but do not necessarily require an understanding of the context of the learning experience in which they engage. Rather the concentration of effort in learning is upon gaining mastery of each step in the learning process and achieving some tangible endpoint at which the context and full implications of the learning process will be revealed to the few who complete the 'course'.

Accompanying this narrow and incremental approach to the learning process, very much from within the tradition of religious scholasticism, is a focus on learning as tangible knowledge and skills and not involving a critical stance either about the knowledge acquired or the learning process as it evolves. Given the central role of

teacher as sage and the idea of wisdom gained step by step, it is easy to see that critique is an activity that is left to the 'experts' who have already completed the journey towards accomplishment rather than to a student who is embarking on the journey. This emphasizes the ritual progress through stages of learning, accompanied by stoic labour and contemplation rather than critical engagement with the objects of learning or of those who are teaching. It also highlights the role of contemplative memorization as a central activity in the process of learning. In its narrowest construction, this activity could be rendered as rote learning, and has often formed the basis of critiques of the Chinese teaching and learning process (Mok et al 2001). However, within the original stem of the learning construct, the repetitive processes of memorization are employed in meditative fashion, almost as prayers, and are part of an essential personal discipline which will result in enhanced understanding and enlightenment achieved over time.

Historically, the Confucian inheritance is also very strong in the forms of assessment used to measure the outcomes of learning. First, the idea of open access to the preliminary factual stages of knowledge acquisition comes from the form of the imperial examination process (discussed in **appendix one**). The study of the classics for the examinations was technically open to any man who had the opportunity and time to embark on the course of study. Few, however, progressed to the examinations themselves, which were highly competitive, and fewer still successfully completed the exercise. Lu Xun's (1978 translation) short stories , for example, are peppered with painful depictions of the implications of failing to complete the process and the scholastic traps in the Imperial age which were open to those who began the course but either failed or did not complete. The notion, therefore, first that the outcomes of learning can be assessed and second that this assessment comes in the form of formal examinations is central to the traditional Chinese idea of teaching and learning. Again, it is possible to see the conception that the hard work involved in the process may one day lead to some kind of deeper intellectual development. But in the short term, the outcomes of any form of learning are extrinsic - passing an exam. Moreover, the determinants of success for the examination are the correct reproduction of the items of knowledge passed down by the teacher. Knowledge is communicated as a unified, factual body of information and the assessment of student progress, therefore, reflects that. Unsurprisingly the idea of formative assessment and

reflective student development - 'learning how to learn' - is something that seems absent in the traditional Chinese approach to learning.

The influence of Socialism

In the twentieth century, Socialist revolutionaries sought to eradicate every trace of the imperial system, often through violent means. However, as noted above, many of the measures taken, especially during the early years of the PRC, did little in the field of education to replace older ways of doing things and certainly seemed to have little influence on everyday educational practices. Ways of teaching and learning remained in place and notions of learning and its assessment were unchanged. The post-revolutionary model of education in China certainly remained both normative and became even more formal than its historical predecessor. In fact, continuity of practice within the Chinese system has been largely practical, the result of scarcity of resources and - because of the continued persecution of intellectuals (Hayhoe, 1989; Pepper, 1996) - a serious shortage of intellectual capital with which to develop alternative approaches to teaching and learning. It also underlines the preoccupation with the substance of learning than style or process. One key new process theme that did emerge temporarily during the Cultural Revolution, however, was the "Worker-soldier-student" model, which linked together work, academic learning and revolutionary activities in a single set of achievements. This approach was strongly influential over many of China's contemporary intellectuals, but suffered an abrupt reversal when the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 (Hayhoe, 1989; Pepper, 1996). Certainly for students in China today, learning still tends to focus on knowledge content, remains mainly teacher-centred, is competitive, exam-centred, elitist, and largely male-gendered. While making a strong link between the country's economic development and the teaching and learning curriculum, it also seems clear that learning preferences in China are anti-vocational (reflecting an age-old social class system which debases physical labour) and have largely reverted to a preference for the more 'academic' disciplines of learning.

Another post-revolution characteristic which emerged strongly in contrast to the imperial era was the anti-intellectualism that characterized so many political campaigns, discussed briefly above. After the Hundred Flowers movement (1956-7), which resulted in the imprisonment and execution of many intellectuals, and then

during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) - which closed schools and colleges throughout China for several years and saw Red Guards persecuting not only the remaining intellectuals but also ordinary teachers in schools - engagement with higher learning became a politically dangerous activity. Social mobility achieved by educational prowess became replaced at that time with mobility achieved through political credentials or personal popularity. The net impact of this was not only to dissuade individuals from articulating their intellectual skills but also to reassert a tradition already imbued with a reverence for non-critical expressions of learning and create an environment where any form of critique not only showed academic impudence but also became unpatriotic. At the same time, however, few new forms of teacher training emerged during the first 40 years of the Republic, (it is important to reassert that teaching is not a graduate profession in China) and what did emerge focused on the acquisition of subject knowledge rather than developing teaching practice. Routine teaching style, therefore, has continued relatively unchanged (Chen, 1999; Cleverly, 1994; Ross, 1991; Sharper and Ning, 1998; Wu, 1992; Zhixin and Jilin, 1994).

Until the Cultural Revolution, end of session examinations remained the only form of assessment. After the fall of the Gang of Four, resource pressure on the educational system ensured that this practice was reintroduced and continues today. The processes of learning, therefore, are geared towards tangible ends expressed in taking an exam. The Key Schools system (instituted by the government to channel resources to designated educational centres of excellence) also retained a system of intense competition both at institutional and individual levels and, though formally abandoned, it remains informally in place throughout the country. Indeed the government's recent project 211 system for Higher Education reflects the tradition of channeling limited central funding to an elite group of 'key' institutions (Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China, website, July 2004). Though representing a continuation in so many ways, however, the main inheritance of socialism appears to be in the shaping of the competitive dynamic within ideas about learning. On the one hand, contemporary social progression is secured through the successful completion of an educational career and, owing to scarcity of resources, opportunities for this are very sought-after. On the other, the socialist insistence on notional equality between people, social and political conformity and the still-intact current of anti-

intellectualism makes it difficult to express individual academic talent without fear of persecution in the classroom or elsewhere. The dynamics of competition in education and the potential dangers of engaging with deep learning, therefore, create a complex and potentially conflicted approach to learning in all its forms. It is in the approach to competition, perhaps, that the tension between historical and contemporary influences on how individuals approach learning becomes most apparent. Certainly, the over-riding impression gained from any study of the history of education in China is that engaging in learning activities for Chinese students is neither a simple nor relaxed decision-making process nor an unconflicted experience even at its simplest levels.

The UK Context

Constructs of teaching and learning

In a similar way to China, the structures and norms of UK HE have their own distinctive cultural inheritance. Essentially a selective system developed along historically elitist terms, in the later twentieth century British HE underwent successive expansions. This development both aimed to educationally enfranchise more of the age-cohort for undergraduate education and to expand provision for non-traditional students, especially mature people studying post-experience and postgraduate courses on a part-time basis.

Predating contemporary massification within HE, twentieth century UK university academic culture exhibited a long but not uncontested blend of teaching and research (Barnett, 1990; Thorens, 1998; Dearlove, 1997, McNay, 1995, Bauman, 1997) . This was based on mainly nineteenth century liberal intellectual notions that effective education at higher levels was best informed by intellectual currency within a discipline and the research which accompanied it. Such a view was especially the case in scientific disciplines and in newly-emerging vocational subjects such as Business and Computing, for example. In these areas, the essentially skills-based foundation of much of the learning suggested a necessary integration with the practical nature of research within the subject area. In addition, the prevailing academic convention that tends to privilege research over teaching activities has encouraged many vocational universities to aspire to research capability because of the potential impacts this might

have either on funding or institutional reputation as a whole (Scott, 1995; Martin. 1999; Watson, 2002).

In general terms, the UK is well-provisioned with HE. History, however, remains an influential indicator in informing the dominant approaches to teaching and learning and dialogue between past and present most potently informs any discussion of theories of learning. Indeed, for some commentators, the key struggle for British HE today is to reconcile teaching and learning practices that evolved in a predominantly elitist system of education with its current mass form (Scott, 1995; Barnett, 1990. 1997; Schuller, 1995; Jacob and Hellstrom, 2003). This aspect of discussion about teaching and learning theories is particularly interesting as a backdrop to consideration of Chinese students within the UK system. The previous education of such students - and potentially their expectations of HE - are likely to be affected by ideas about a highly elitist and competitive HE environment which may be far away from their experience in Britain today. This section of the literature review, therefore, attempts a short summary of some of the main currents within Anglo-Saxon-based theories of teaching and learning and moves on to discuss some of the contrasts between contemporary ideas about learning in the UK and China.

The nature of teaching and learning in UK HE

One of the first aspects to consider in this context, is what characterizes learning in HE and how it might be represented as distinctive. Building on the brief discussion above about the changing nature of HE in Britain, Brockbank and McGill (1998) among others (including the hierarchy of learning and teaching in Biggs, 1999). contrast 'traditional' and 'progressive' indigenous models of teaching and learning. Here the traditional approach, inherited from historically elitist HE structures. proposes prescriptive teacher-centred, didactic teaching and learning processes (achieved mainly through lectures), individualized learning, student passivity. memorization, and summative assessment in the form of examinations. There is also an implicit emphasis on the idea of attaining mastery of the techniques and building blocks of subject skills before engaging in critique. On the other hand, the progressive approach - which the authors privilege as more effective - stresses a student-centred process, active and collective learning, the employment of a greater variety of teaching interventions, the combination of formative and summative

assessments and the blending of transferable skills development, including procedural learning. This grouping of approaches moves the teaching and learning agenda profoundly away from an uncontested and exclusive insistence on subject content and conceives of higher learning as a more broadly-based collection of activities than within the traditional model. Importantly, it also pluralizes theorizing about teaching and learning and creates a contestable pedagogic discourse in place of a set of prescriptive norms that govern theory and practice.

Within both the traditional and progressive models of the teaching and learning process in Anglo-Saxon discussions of teaching and learning, there are a range of characteristics relating to the nature of intellectual activity and its ends that seem to distinguish learning in HE. Entwistle (1988), for example, presents a fairly representative normative account of the teaching and learning process. For him, it is important to differentiate between the aims of intellectual development, the social aims and setting of education, and to integrate three separate elements of intelligence in creating effective teaching and learning: memory, logical reasoning and imaginative thinking. This focus on the imagination and the engagement of students emphasizes active learning not passive memorization, a common theme in western constructs of learning (see also Barnett, 1997, Brockbank and McGill, 1998, Foreman and Johnston, 1999, Frazer, 1992). The activities of student learning in higher education become then:

- Memorizing where necessary
- Relating new information to old
- Linking theoretical ideas of academic knowledge to experience
- Adopting a critical stance to other people's ideas
- Evaluating evidence with caution. (Entwistle, p.4)

It is clear from this grouping that for Entwistle, the emphasis in the learning experience lies within the individual and with the individual's ability to synthesize and critically engage with information. It also proposes a differentiated, individualized perspective on the learning process, where each person may approach the learning task in a different way and interpret different outcomes from similar experiences.

Nonetheless, shared experiences frequently prompt individual insights and make a valuable contribution to the learning process. This view of the iterative process of learning shared between the collective and the individual is fairly widely represented within the conservative canons of education research, while those who espouse the more progressive model privilege constructivist, collective forms of learning over the individual. Such ideas stand in stark contrast to constructs of teaching and learning originating in China, however, where the learning is exclusively individual and where critical engagement with teaching information is not necessarily welcomed or even accepted.

Critical thinking and styles of learning

The issue of criticality and critical thinking that Entwistle evokes in his model of learning in HE, features strongly in commentaries on effective learning at higher levels. Barnett (1997) discusses at length the erosion of systems within HE that support the development of critical thinking skills, a capability which he proposes as central to the attainment of deeper learning and which is required by graduate employers (Meyer-Dohm, 1990). However, Barnett also sets out a clear typology articulating a sophisticated approach to understanding criticality within the learning process - a recognition of the fact that concern among academics about a decline in an amorphous 'critical thinking' ability in students is as common as it has been undefined. This in itself highlights an important point, which is the existence of a tendency in UK Education Studies to articulate general notions about constructs of learning in HE, without a clear accompanying identification of their components or specification of how their development might be encouraged (Barnett, 1997). Nonetheless, a fairly strong consensus exists among theorists that a key distinguishing characteristic of higher learning is that of criticality and that an ability to critically evaluate information inputs or solve problems is a primary outcome of the HE process (Ramsden, 1992; Ketteridge et al, 1999; Barnett, 1990, 1997; Scott, 1995; Biggs, 1999).

In addition, this critical faculty profoundly informs discourse about 'effective' styles or approaches to learning at a higher level (Brockbank and McGill, 1998). For example, Biggs (1987) and Ramsden (1988 and 1992) develop Marton and Saljo's earlier (1976) work which discusses 'deep' and 'surface' approaches to learning, a

concept which correlates student motivation, situation and performance in evaluating learning approaches (see also Marton and Ramsden, 1988 and forming the basis of learning development in Biggs, 1999). For them, 'deep' approaches - desirable for effectively-learning students - employ critical evaluation skills in achieving deep understanding of the subject of study, while 'surface' approaches focus on the instrumental aspects of the task, memorization and do not attempt to synthesize new and existing knowledge, reconcile conflicts or paradoxes or internalize the outcomes of contemplative activity. In addition, 'deep' approaches regard the learning experience in a holistic fashion, concerned with contextualizing the subjects of learning within a wider framework while 'surface' approaches take an atomisitic view of learning, breaking each learning task into separate parts and failing to recognize either the role of context or the importance of integrating and synthesizing learning into previous experience (Ramsden 1992). Biggs (1987) also identified a flexible 'achieving' approach, which aims to maximize performance by the adoption of either deep or surface techniques in order to achieve a good grade within a formal educational setting.

In this way, it seems clear that something of a link exists between student motivation and social expectations of education, as inputs, and student performance, as output, in the HE process that brings a cultural definition to describing and understanding learning. In different contexts, students might be either motivated by a satisficing approach, focused on task performance, an approach which seeks genuine critical understanding of a subject or an approach characterized by the desire to excel in the extrinsic rewards of education (Biggs, 1999). Explicit within this taxonomy of motivations and performances, therefore, is a cultural privileging of the critical thinking and evaluative capability that Barnett (1997) discusses as 'genuine' or 'deeper' learning, which seems composed largely of the student's capacity to understand through the medium of such critical engagement. This view is reinforced by the numerous commentaries which regard 'surface' tactics, such as memorization or rote learning in a pejorative way (Various in Ketteridge, Fry and Marshal, 1999, Gibbs, 1992).

Classroom dynamics and practical learning

Within a consideration of teaching and learning in the UK context, it is important to consider the routine dynamics that govern classroom practice. A number of propositions about teacher-student behaviour can be inferred directly from theories of teaching and learning discussed above. For example, active, rather than passive student behaviour is widely regarded as effective and, as such. is highlighted as important in various study skills manuals available for students (e.g. Cottrell. 2003). This implies an interactive classroom where students are enabled to show their activity, to ask questions freely and where assessments also provide opportunities for active engagement.

In addition, the progressive model's emphasis on constructivist epistemology implies a collaborative approach to teaching and learning, especially in problem-based learning environments (various in Ketteridge et al. 1998, Brockbank and McGill, 1998, Currie and Knights, 2003). The strong emphasis on critical thinking and problem-solving also stresses an essentially pluralist construction to knowledge, one which regards knowledge as discourse, not as proposition (Bridges, 2000; Corson, 2000; Currie and Knights, 2003). As such the text is not regarded as sacrosanct but as the articulation of an individual view and, therefore, open to critique. Equally, within the broad context of HE in the UK, the agenda of widening participation for non-traditional students, especially in postgraduate education implies a stress in UK HE on the essentially *adult* nature of university education with all that implies about autonomous learners, working in a relatively self-defining context (Tennant, 1994). Certainly many of these propositions are borne out by commentaries and handbooks which deal with good practice in HE. Ramsden (1992), for example, is open in his critique of the formal, didactic methods favoured in the traditional model of HE, such as lecturing. in spite of a recognition that it remains a predominant teaching method within the sector. Ketteridge, Fry and Marshall (1999) also reinforce the importance of an active contribution from the students and explore the role of the teacher as facilitator, not expert:

"the teacher cannot do all the work if learning is to be the outcome. As designers of courses and as teachers. if we want to 'produce' graduates of higher education able to

think, act, create and innovate at a relatively high level, then we need to consider how we lead learners beyond being regurgitator, copyist or operative." (p.32)

Drawing together theory and practice in teaching and learning

At the same time, many aspects of the traditional approach remain embedded within routine practices within British HE (Gow and Kember, 1990; Biggs, 1999). Lecturers still maintain their credibility on the basis of their currency within their subject and, often, through their research activities rather than their teaching credentials. Nor is didacticism completely replaced by independent student learning. University education maintains many of its formal trappings, in spite of the efflorescence of different modes of study and pathways through the formal structures. In many respects, therefore, deriving from the inclusiveness of the progressive approach, teaching and learning in UK HE can be viewed as highly heterogeneous in nature, diverse in student communities and populated by numerous discourses. As such it is hard to characterize effectively except in the most general terms.

Overall, UK HE appears to be in a state of flux. Building on both traditional structures and traditional practices within the teaching profession, recent epistemological and pedagogical changes have begun to rearticulate the nature of higher learning and its mechanisms within British society. This does not mean that the past has been abandoned, however. An increasing trend towards diversity, not only within the composition of its community is further influencing the shaping of HE in Britain (Bridges, 2000). At the same time, actors external to the university community itself, such as government ministers and officials, are developing counter-forces which insist on the regulation of education quality through the imposition of standard practices and accreditation procedures for institutions and academics (Henkel, 1997; Deem, 1998; Broadfoot, 1998; Blackstone, 2001). Within these shifting forces, however, there are discernible themes which make the HE 'experience' in the UK distinctive from other types of educational process both in the way it is conceptualized and practically constructed in the lecture hall and the classrooms. It is these themes, highlighted above, that form the basis of the environment into which Chinese students arrive and which are likely to have the most profound effects on shaping their day to day experience. They also provide the

foundation for any comparison between Chinese and British perspectives on teaching and learning.

Comparison between the PRC and UK: outline profiles of knowledge, learning and learners

Drawing on the conclusions from the preceding sections discussing education and learning in the two national contexts, a summary of the key comparisons between Chinese and British learning and learners is shown below in **figure one**.

Figure one: Education and learning in China and the UK

Aspect	**China**	**United Kingdom**
Construction of knowledge	Unitarist, propositional - emphasis on learned facts	Pluralist, procedural and propositional - emphasis on learning architecture
Intellectual designation	Scholasticism - Intellectuals inherent to machinery of State and Society	Criticality - intellectual autonomy
Competitive dynamics	Personal, individualized competition	Individual and collaborative against an external standard
Pedagogic orientation	Didactic, teacher-centred	Facilitative, student-centred
Breadth of curriculum	Narrow - strict focus on vocational and scientific subjects	Broad - humanities, sciences and vocational subjects (?narrowness developing post-massification?)
Conceptions of learning	Learning process relatively untheorized, regarded as undifferentiated and largely tacit in learning outcomes	Learning discourse is explicit - taxonomy of learning e.g. deep and surface approaches, learning process internalized in learning outcomes

Learning objects and outcomes	Tangible, objective - universally shared by learners	Less tangible, more subjective - personal to learner, as well as group
Correlation between learning and Labour	Effective learning is the result of labour	Effective learning is influenced by cognitive ability and other factors
Learning context	Learning is absolute - uninfluenced by context	Learning is situational - context matters
Learning and society	Learning is socially normative	Learning is personally emancipatory
Higher Education and society	State HE is highly elitist; private sector developing rapidly - attendant quality assurance issues	Rapidly developing Massification of HE

Limitations of the comparison

In spite of the identification of themes or characteristics that define British and Chinese ideas about teaching and learning in HE as different, when beginning to compare the two it is important to recognize the essential complexity of both systems and that both are fundamentally dynamic, continuing to develop and evolve. For example, in spite of an apparent paucity of educational theorizing in China, recent years of structural reform both in China and the UK have perforce placed more and more pressure on practitioners in both environments to consider their approaches to teaching and learning strategies from a theoretical standpoint. The points identified in **figure one**, therefore, should be regarded more as positions on a continuum and not held in dualistic tension. Moreover, the scope of this dissertation is extremely limited and cannot encompass the full range of issues from within contemporary discourse. (For a more detailed summary comparison of the historical paradigm shifts of Chinese education set against UK HE, see Turner and Acker (2002) pps. 44-46). At the same time, there are a few clear constraints on the UK / PRC comparison that must be taken into account in order to avoid a simplistic opposition of all aspects of practice in the two countries.

Basic similarities

One of these is to condition any model of teaching and learning practice in the UK with the recognition that many historical and existing teaching practices in Britain are similar to those in China. Moreover, the outward criteria for 'success' in assessing educational outcomes are also the same - resulting in the award of a degree which confers some kind of improved social or work access than that which is available to many without the qualification. In addition, Brockbank and McGill's (1998) traditional model contains high levels of consonance with ideas about successful teaching and learning interactions in the Chinese approach. Although the authors propose that this approach to teaching and learning is regressive - and other commentators (Barnett, 1992, for example) claim it has altogether lost legitimacy as an approach to teaching and learning - it is important to remember that lecturing, a strongly didactic approach to teaching, remains a core teaching method in UK universities at all levels and assessments are frequently individually-based and/or in the format of an examination. At the same time, retention of these aspects of the traditional model often originate in resource constraints while the discourse of good practice and effective teaching and learning has taken on much of the progressive approach. It remains true, however, that many basic strategies from within the traditional model remain at the heart of everyday UK HE teaching practice. In this way routine teaching approaches in China and the UK may not be so far removed from each other at least in aspects of their mechanics.

The defining role of criticality

At the same time, there remain significant differences between British and Chinese education. The issue of criticality, for example, is one which even within the 'traditional' model in the UK is regarded as central to the HE experience and the key factor that differentiates 'deeper' learning at degree level from learning in schools and further education, while within the Chinese perspective on learning, criticality tends to be marginalized. Higher learning in the Chinese construction (as discussed above) appears to be articulated more through the scope and breadth of technical detail learned within a subject than in the adoption of any critical stance on subject. Constructions of knowledge in the UK, therefore, are explicitly open to critique and through its practice the nature of the zeitgeist in academic discourse is relatively

transparent. In China, on the other hand, the construction of knowledge is unitary and uncontested. The issue of criticality is also important because critical thinking requires the learner to take a critical perspective on the learning process as well as its substance, combining propositional and procedural knowledge. The context of the learner, and the learning activity, therefore, becomes an important and necessarily transparent aspect of the learning outcomes. In the Chinese construct of teaching and learning, the absence of criticality tends to reinforce the obscurity of the process aspects of learning, however deep the substance learning may be. An absence of process measures in the overall learning environment may limit opportunities for change and undermine the possibility of radicalism or innovation in both the substance and process of learning - new Ends may well require new Means for their accomplishment. In this way, it is possible to see more clearly perhaps why the essence of constructions of learning in China present such a stable and unchanging picture, especially when counterpointed with the dynamic and sometimes faddish patterns of educational theorizing in the UK (Woo, 1993; Baumann, 1997; Krucken, 2003).

Competition and massification

Equally, attitudes towards student competition in the two countries appear in contrast to each other. In the UK system, the classification process applies an external standard against which all students compete. Theoretically, therefore, it is possible for an entire cohort to achieve the same level of final degree award at undergraduate level, for example. In China, competition is internally normed, based on individual cohorts. This process results in a personal ranking, which may tend to encourage more personalized and direct expression of competition in the teaching and learning process. In these examples, therefore, the similarities between UK and China are revealed as focusing mainly on the outer instruments of teaching and learning methods and the contrasts in constructs of learning reveal themselves in the underlying epistemological preoccupations and in the different conceptualizations between the aims and objectives of liberal education and education within a more normative social context.

On the other hand, policy and the implications of HE massification in the UK also appear to be challenging some of the historic assertions of even the underlying

differences between the two systems. In recent years successive British governments have been seeking to align economic and educational objectives - departing from the traditional liberal values of learning for its own sake - which has been a long-standing connection made by the government in China (Bridges, 2000; Rowland, 1997). In addition to this, incipient vocationalism in the UK, increasing levels of educational enfranchisement and the development of mass participation have increasingly asked questions about the viability of maintaining teaching and learning approaches that encourage criticality, based on high levels of cognitive achievement. For some, the very nature of HE in Britain is changing as a result (Scott, 1995). Paradoxically, however, at the same time the 'progressive' learning model asserts the importance of approaches to teaching which encourage reflection and deeper intrapersonal learning, group participation and the combination of transferable core skills as well as traditional academic attainments. And in spite of the abandonment of many liberal educational values, the UK retains much of the belief about the essentially emancipatory nature of higher learning for individuals, far removed from collectivist and normative constructions in Chinese education. In these practical emphases, certainly, the UK and Chinese models seem very far apart from each other in terms of everyday practice and the preferred routes to student success.

Similarities and differences: model students

Summarizing this discussion, therefore, **Figure two** draws out a range of learning characteristics and expectations of a notional Chinese university student against institutionalized expectations of students in the UK that stem from indigenous theories of education and pedagogical assumptions in UK practice.

Figure two: Chinese and British student archetypes

The 'model' Chinese student	**The 'model' British student**
Young, unmarried, full-time student	Any age, studying through many patterns
Works hard to achieve results - the harder working, the better the student	Combines hard work and trained / natural ability

Passive learner, listens to the teacher and studies privately	Active learner, asks lots of questions and participates vocally in class
Learns mainly by reading and processing knowledge	Learns by combining a range of learning skills - an active, problem-solving-based learner
Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of study according to teacher direction	Meets the teacher's suggestions with independent mind and imagination, studies in trained but personalized style
Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen	Intellectual and moral behaviour not an inevitable combination - the development of individual ethics
Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'	May strive to 'do one's best' against the standard
Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom	Takes a critical stance on knowledge and learning
Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries	Contextualises learning and relates learning to other aspects of life in a holistic manner

The comparison here provides a fairly strong contrast between the expectations that appear to derive from student experience and educational system in either setting. The gaps are fairly obvious but since most of them are likely to lie within the context of motivation and orientation to work, evidence of these gaps may be less easy to find, especially as students continue to adapt and evolve their approach to learning as they encounter new learning phenomena during a year of UK-based study. In a practical sense, the potential differences in orientation to learning and motivations for study could result in a number of inhibitions in the student's ability to effectively perform in the set-piece assessment mechanisms used in both the UK and in China. A striking but simple example of this might be in what constitutes criteria for success in performance assessment. In China, the good student is likely to rehearse verbatim the propositional knowledge that has been passed on from the lecturer. Any deviation from this approach would be regarded as less than effective performance. Similar

conduct within the UK system would appear to show a complete absence of criticality and imagination, two qualities highly prized as examples of deeper learning in the UK context. It is quite possible to imagine, therefore, an "A" grade student from China completely failing in the UK system unless they are able to make some speedy adjustments in their approaches to learning in the new environment.

Unitarism, pluralism and professional reflection: problems of 'getting in' from the outside

A greater implication of the differences between the UK and the Chinese systems come in the aspects of the study which deal with my own professional reflections about teaching and learning and the ways in which the conduct of the study have influenced my teaching practice. One of the most interesting parts of the work from this point of view is the way that progressive ideas about education are challenging more traditional views and what that means to how practitioners are conceptualizing their own practice. Certainly the differences between the traditional model, as adopted in China, and the progressive approach, which features highly in UK educational discourse, exposes the key phenomena of interest in the study. As noted above, the project focuses on the meetings of educational and personal cultures in a number of fairly obvious ways, as the participants find themselves in a new country, studying a new subject, in a new institution, for example. However, the epistemological consequences for Chinese students coming from a highly normative educational environment into an education system in the UK which is fueled by pluralist practitioner conceptions (if not always practices) of education within a set of progressive approaches, form a more subtle cultural nexus which is interesting to explore.

There is a key question about the validity of applying constructivist views to Chinese education and to Chinese students which derives from a rational-positivist epistemological standpoint, in spite of recent attempts to reassert the critical potential of Confucian-tradition pedagogies (Chan, 2001; Kim, 2003). Nonetheless, the epistemological framework for the current study is essentially based on the values of constructivism. The methodology more fully accounts for the research design. Essentially, however, the project's central theme is that participation in the study will

have some influence in shaping the participants emergent approaches to learning and will shape my own understanding of and approach to teaching. Moreover, as stated above, the context in which the students find themselves is one in which the fundamental epistemological assumptions about the nature and shaping and purposes of education and learning may differ from their own. The key focus of the exploration in the project, therefore, rests on the ways in which the participants respond when not only the subjects or routine mechanics of their learning experiences change from what they are used to but when the entire educational context is differently conceptualized by those around them. There is the potential for a range of varying personal responses to this inherently disorientating experience to result. These range from confusion or despair to transformational changes in personal perspective on learning and potentially to personal identity. The possibility of personally negative outcomes for the student, in particular, exposes an important set of ethical questions in considering teaching and learning in this context. Certainly these difficult issues surrounding the subtle and long-term consequences of learning in divergent cultural contexts underlie much of the original impetus for the project.

Implicit theories of learning as 'a way in'

Theorizing about this essential 'clash' of epistemologies is somewhat difficult since most of the observable aspects of student behaviour and performance may give only limited information about the essential nature of the students cognitive or affective experiences. A study, therefore, which focuses on observable performance is likely to provide unsatisfactory insights into the ways that the participants are conceptualizing learning. Theories that focus on the tangible performance aspects of learning behaviour would prove equally unsatisfactory. It is for this reason that the notion of 'implicit theories' of learning becomes useful as a way of providing a framework about which to discuss the participants' behaviour (Brockbank and McGill, 1998; Claxton 1996; Light and Cox, 2001). Deriving in part from cognitive psychology, this notion discusses the essential nature of the learning experience and the way in which we learn about the new and change (or not) our perspectives. Argyris and Schon's early work on 'espoused theory' and 'theory-in-use' provides a good example of the way in which implicit theories can be conceptualized (Argyris and Schon, 1978, 1992; Argyris, 1992). From this perspective, an individual is in

possession of a 'mental model' or frame of reference which prompts responses to given stimuli based on previous life experiences and predisposes individuals to behave according to certain routines in similar situations: so-called 'simple learning' (Argyris 1992).

Essentially simple learning engages our habitual responses in order to avoid the time-consuming necessity of regarding every event as new and attempting to think through the fundamentals of behaviour each time we meet it. On the other hand, some learning events not only require us to develop new mechanical responses to the substance of the stimulus but also to adjust our cognitive perspective - our mental models - on this and future phenomena in order to avoid making a habitual response to events which require differing, or more complex strategies. At the same time, Argyris and Schon (1978, 1992) posit that people have considerable capacity for self-deception, and meet obstacles in their learning development. Individuals may be unconscious of their actual responses, believing them to be other than they are. In other words, we can believe we are doing one thing but are actually doing something else. The 'theory-in-use' - what we are actually doing - is in conflict with our 'espoused theory' - what we believe we are doing - and both our learning and our performance responses are sub-optimal as a result. Our 'theory-in-use'. therefore, remains influenced by past conditioned responses and is tacit, requiring considerable deep intra-personal reflection to make it explicit and understood. At the same time. Argyris (1992) asserts that it is extremely difficult for individuals to engage in effective complex learning without assistance from a facilitative external source, which opens up the notion to the influence of constructivist perspectives on learning as a social activity.

This basic set of ideas have strongly influenced thinking about the processes of learning. especially in the contribution of the transformational in constructs of deeper learning. However. there are also other theoretical roots for this notion. deriving from the epistemological perspectives of constructivism and its emphasis on 'fitting new understanding and knowledge into. with. extending and supplanting. old understanding and knowledge'. (Ketteridge, Fry and Marshal, 1999, p.23). Belenky et al in *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1986 / 1997), for example, explored a taxonomy of women's learning development by interpreting women's tacit conceptualizations of

themselves as learners. More recently, Claxton (1996) discussed the role of implicit theories of learning in the way that adult students encounter educational experiences and Light and Cox (2001) discuss the role of implicit theories in the development of reflective learning. For Claxton - reflecting something of a constructivist psychology of learning - implicit theories are both tacit and dynamic, the gateway between our past conceptualizations of learning and subject to change as we encounter new experiences. It is important to make the implicit explicit, therefore, if transformation, or complex learning, is to take place and many of the obstacles to learning can be traced to a misalignment of the two. In a similar way, Bruner (1996) asserts the importance of making explicit the cultural assumptions in both psychology and perspectives on education because of their tacit nature, their impact on process and performance in student learning and the constructivist nature of the learning experience:

"We do not learn a way of life and ways of deploying mind unassisted, unscaffolded, naked before the world.....We learn an enormous amount not only about the world but about ourselves by discourse with Others. Agency and collaboration are rather like yin and yang." (p.93)

The over-arching concept of implicit theories, therefore, provides a convenient bridging notion for theorizing about the outcomes of the current study. It will enable consideration of how far the participants possess ideas about learning that seem different from the dominant context in which they are studying and to go on and explore the nature and response to any differences. For example, do students redound upon their theories-in-use and ignore their new context, do they feel confused as they struggle with the implicit nature of the difference between current and past environments, do they rapidly shift from one way of thinking about learning to another via engagement with complex learning, do they take an instrumental approach with espoused theory and theory-in-use showing themselves to be in conflict with each other, with subsequent performance effects.

Conclusion: research themes and questions for consideration

The contextual and theoretical frameworks that boundary the current study seem broad and encompass cultural pedagogies, teaching and learning theories and practice-based dynamics in HE. Taking the information mapped out in the literature and discussed above, however, a clear set of themes and priorities to consider in the project emerge, which can be briefly summarized by way of conclusion.

First, the broadest, descriptive question for the study is to explore how the participants involved in the project, as students from mainland China, respond to studying in the UK. All the participants in the study are undertaking postgraduate research and will have experienced many years of education before their arrival in the UK. To what extent, therefore, does their actual experience reflect the agenda suggested by the literature and how far are any struggles they experience in the UK similar to those 'gaps' inferred from a comparison between UK and Chinese systems? The second issue refers to the organization and structure that might be put upon the participants' experiences: are the students disparate in their approaches to learning or can they be grouped in some way that responds to the literature? Consideration of this question is likely to refer to aspects of learning theories discussed above, especially in the area of deep, surface and achieving approaches to learning. Third: to explore how the participants conceive of learning - do their implicit 'theories' change during their course of study in the UK and, if so, how? This question is of central importance and integrates the other themes in the agenda for the project, as determined by the literature. Finally: what can I learn as a teaching practitioner working extensively with Chinese students about the teaching and learning environment that might support future students from China to learn / perform more effectively in the UK context? This last issue, though a lesser aspect of the overall work, certainly underpins the impetus to begin the study and is, therefore, important.

Overall, the literature identifies what is potentially a huge scope for a project of this kind. The difficulties of exploring the nature of motivation and learning experience across not only cultural boundaries but also fundamental epistemological barriers throw up enormous questions about the practicality of the work. At the same time, the literature also presents a relatively clear - if broad - pathway through a set of

definable themes and issues which can usefully provide insight into important question attaching to the nature of international student experience and academic exchange in the contemporary context in the UK. Importantly, the literature sets an agenda, a starting point, for the kinds of intellectual and professional reflections which lie at the heart of the project for all of the participants, including myself. The most important point to reinforce in a study of this kind, however, is that while the literature can be used illustratively and as an historical and theoretical backdrop to the outcomes of the work, both beginning and end-point for the main focus of the project remains the students themselves, hence an explicit emphasis on interpretative research methods, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aims of the research

As discussed in the introductory chapters, this project aimed to investigate the cultures or 'implicit theories' of learning (Claxton, 1996) shaping Chinese students' study approaches in UK HE. It took an essentially holistic approach, discussing influences on students' studies both in- and out-side the classroom. A second, inherently-reflective focus arose from my own teaching relationship with the students. This aimed to develop insights into my professional practice as an academic working with international students in the UK.

Research questions

The key research questions for this project are summarized as:

- How did participants experience study in the UK?
- Were there any commonalities in their orientation to learning over the year?
- If so, how far did these themes resonate with the 'cultural gaps' in models of Chinese /UK learning that emerge from the literature?
- Did participants' implicit theories of learning change during their studies in the UK?
- What did I learn as a practitioner about working with students from China?

Research strategy

The epistemological perspective from which the project stemmed was broadly within the interpretative tradition. Inherent in its design was a reflective element for myself as researcher: personal reflections about my own practice as an academic in both China and Britain provided the initial impetus for the work. Overall, the project strategy was constructed, therefore, as an iterative exploration of both how Chinese students developed during their studies in Britain and as a journey of reflective discovery for myself. The project operated within a number of phenomenological themes within social constructionism and narrative research, through their assertion

that social realities are not objectively given but consciously and unconsciously constructed by participants (Schwandt, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Essentially, the work built on the notion that through the research both participants, as students, and myself, as an academic, might be able to make explicit our perceptions of the teaching and learning dynamics that we were weaving together in the seminar room and research office. This narrative integration, consonant with the reflexivity of narrative research and autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2000), aspired to develop relationships through which we would be able to engage with teaching and learning positively. Out of this mutual process of awareness-raising in research conversations, I also hoped to gain insights to help me be positive and sympathetic in future teaching and learning interactions. Underpinning the heart of the work, therefore, were essentially participative, constructionist values (Ellis and Bochner, 1996).

Data collection strategies

The project's interpretative epistemological orientation led it inevitably towards a qualitative data-collection framework. In detail, the research employed a broadly-mixed assemblage of instruments - a background questionnaire contextualizing the interviews, reflective journals and observations - an approach well-established within social science research (Punch 1998). Overall, however, the context of the project remained firmly qualitative. This particular orientation derived from a number of factors inherent in its epistemological aims. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.3) note the tendency of qualitative work to develop as a dense patchwork or *bricolage* of mixed methods, in which no single approach is privileged, contrasted to a positivist orientation which is more prescriptive and normative in its parameters. The project was also governed less by a sense of structure and particulars of routine research interventions and more by a focus on agency, the roles and influences of the players involved. This is a characteristic hallmark of data-collection approaches within phenomenological and other insider-oriented traditions (Tierney, 2000; Denscombe, 2003). Such a focus inevitably derived from its concern with "implicit" theories - both my own and others - and "capturing the individual's point of view" (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p5) in a rich picture of emotion and event. Such emphases typify

qualitative methodologies (Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Hamilton 1994: Strauss and Corbin 1998), where the perspective draws on rich illustration rather than the articulation of universal laws of behaviour. Nonetheless, qualitative methods have been criticized for being 'unscientific' (Denzin and Lincoln 1994 P.4: Smith 1998). not representing the kinds of "hard" science privileged by experimental methods (Smith 1998; Cohen and Mannion 1994). Equally, commentators have argued that positivism's rejection of the postmodern frame from which much qualitative research emerges, has augmented a philosophical dichotomy inhibiting the potential scope of social science inclusiveness (Smith, 1998). Fundamentally, the intimacy of the affective and cognitive life-worlds that the project sought to explore rendered ineffectual more prescriptive emphases within the structures of quantitative approaches, so it remained firmly in the qualitative camp.

The influence of culture in the research design

To enable a beginning, it was first necessary to identify an appropriate sample among Chinese students and to establish conditions of confidence enabling them to discuss their experiences openly and honestly. Historically, within Chinese culture, the development of conditions of trust have been an important prerequisite for achieving openness in any social interaction (Tsui, Farh and Xin, 2000), enhancing already-present sensitivities about confidentiality and trust affecting much cross-cultural research (Hantrais and Mangen, 1996). At least in part, this stems from particularistic historical Chinese social conventions, making ritual power dynamics evident in interpersonal communication (Gay, 2003). In addition, China's recent political history has also sensitized personal information disclosure and its uses. Such protocols had the potential to influence both quality and integrity of information-disclosure in the project. It was particularly important, therefore, to establish personal rapport with participants quickly and to develop an interactive, cooperative research frame. I will discusses the specific influences in more detail below. Overall, however, they exerted clear controls on the project's emergence. Notwithstanding an awareness of the influence of such cultural factors, it was equally important to balance the opposite dangers of engaging in discourse with cultural stereotypes instead of real people and to be sensitive to the participants as individuals (Beamer and Varner, 2001).

Outline Research design

Summary

The research took place over the course of one academic year, 2001-02, involving students recently arrived (either for pre-sessional English language courses or direct in September) from the PRC to the UK to study one-year taught postgraduate degrees in Business. The aim was to work with and observe students at regular intervals, beginning as near as possible to the point of entry in September/October.

Research site

The study site was the University of Hertfordshire (UH), a British 'post-1992' university. Prior to obtaining university status, the institution had existed as Hatfield Polytechnic, offering mainly vocational HE courses to local students. The university had actively recruited students from China to its Business School since 1995. Within UK HE, therefore, UH was well established, to a large degree 'typical' of the environment Chinese students would encounter when coming to study in the UK.

The obvious primary reason for the selection of the site was that this was my place of employment at the beginning of the study, and, therefore, the only suitable venue for a piece of reflective practitioner research. Its selection was also influenced by other factors, however. First, the high profile international student recruitment activities in which the newer universities, especially UH, had been engaged in China compared to the more established universities (Economist, 2003a). This resulted in a high share of newly-arriving self-pay Chinese students for the new universities, compared to their longer-established counterparts. The potential sample size for the work, therefore, was good, as well as making the study apposite as an exploration of the UK's contemporary environment. Second, my own employment with the university stemmed directly from its involvement with China, since I had been specifically recruited to undertake teaching activities in both the PRC and Britain. This contributed directly to the institution's willingness to allow me research access.

Population and sample

As noted above, the research population was PRC students studying on taught Master's degrees in Business (MBA and MA in International Business Management, with most modules taught in common). Those involved perforce composed an opportunity sample, drawing from willing volunteers among students that I taught. This approach to sample selection is well established for practitioner research studies (Punch, 1998). Sample selection was driven by a number of considerations. First, retaining contact with students throughout the year was one of the greatest potential challenges, especially as the intensity of academic and social demands increased for students over time. Working with a group of willing volunteers mitigated this problem considerably, particularly since I had no mandate within the university to otherwise require participation. Second, working with my own students allowed me opportunities to observe classroom behaviour relatively unobtrusively and naturally. Equally, the reflective elements of the project were profoundly shaped by working with my own students. Finally, initial enquiries among academic colleagues identified some reluctance to permit classroom observations (though they agreed to administer questionnaires), which practically limited the project's scope.

Though possessing a number of advantages for the project, an opportunity sample also involved some limitations. In particular, working with my own students potentially highlighted lecturer/student power dynamics in ways that could distort the research. It was important, therefore, to take account of this during the data collection and analysis stages. Second, lecturer/ student relationships influenced both the interviews and the level of attention I could give to classroom observations, since I was teaching and observing simultaneously. None of these considerations undermined the integrity of the work fatally, however, and I have incorporated reflections about issues arising in the interpretation and analysis.

The interview process

The project's aim was to obtain information that both revealed the individuals as they developed and to reflect on how their experiences resonated with the "typical" Chinese student profile outlined in chapter two. This was primarily achieved by the use of life-history-style case methods, tried and tested within narrative and action

research (Winter, 1989, Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The data was collected, therefore, though regular one-to-one lightly-structured conversations between participants and myself. The interviews were tape-recorded, with each participant's agreement. I loosely guided the agenda to ensure we focused on teaching and learning issues and to explore specific topics more deeply. Essentially, however, participants shaped the conversation-flow freely. The overall framework for the discussions, however, was to investigate primary motivational influences affecting each participant during their studies. Though supplemented by observations in the lecture/ seminar rooms and my journal entries, the main body of the data was generated through the participation in and analysis of the interviews.

The involvement of the researcher

The interactive nature of deep individual inquiry involved in reflective and narrative research (Moon 1999) possesses some disadvantages, mainly because it models an interaction with participants not "typical" for the total population. This potentially shifts research outcomes through "halo effects". A good example of potential distortions caused by researcher participation occurred in the famous industrial Hawthorne studies of the 1930s, for example (Huckzynski and Buchanan, 2004). Here, initial results proved counterintuitive and were later discovered to have been influenced positively by researcher/ participant relationships. Such issues of mutual influence showed a clear potential to affect the development of any project where the style and quality of data gathered is highly dependant on interpersonal relationships. Certainly personal involvement between researcher and research participants remains unconventional (Denscombe, 2003). Nonetheless, the development of such a dynamic is perhaps inevitable, given the inherent nature of phenomenology - especially in the conduct of work involving complex cross-cultural affective and cognitive reflection. Even though relationships of openness and trust developed between myself and the participants, therefore, the research's conceptual framework operated within a methodological orientation that acknowledged such interpersonal dynamics as a reality and legitimately internalized them within the design, rather than regarding them as problematic, undermining the project's outcomes. Nonetheless, it was important to remain aware of the balance between inside-out and outside-in perspectives and explore opportunities within design and data which facilitated some measure of generalisability. A delicate counterpoint existed, therefore, between

personal involvement and detachment, especially during data interpretation and analysis.

These issues were particularly complex for two reasons. First, as briefly indicated above, general socio-cultural values exist in China which require the nurturing of personalized relationships between researcher and participants to a high degree (various from: Watkins and Biggs 1996, 2001). Second, the fact that I was both lecturer and researcher inevitably influenced how I framed my role in the process of data collection. To a large extent, this was positively facilitated by my interpretivist approach. The use of reflective logs and journals also assisted in my reflections about these issues, documented research processes clearly, and helped to make my role more explicit during data analysis. Journal notes also supported the project's professional-reflective aspects. Through conversations with the research participants, the use of journals and the incorporation of reflective 'space' to the project, therefore, I developed insights into my teaching practice and considered the impact of my involvement with the participants on their attitudes and development. This type of approach built on work begun by researchers such as Belenky et al (1986) and other interpretative educational studies (e.g. various in Walford, 1991). A limitation in the process was that I was working as a sole researcher, engaged exclusively in intrapersonal reflection rather than within a research team benefiting from explicit discussion as themes and issues emerged.

Ethical considerations

The ethical balance in this project was delicate. The context of the research, taking place in my own work-place and with students with whom I had a professional relationship required careful management and scrutiny. A clear power relationship exists between lecturer and students, and it was important to reassure participants that there was no correlation between the classroom and project participation. Equally, the development of a direct research relationship with me, as their lecturer, gave participants enhanced contact with me compared to their peers, potentially encouraging them to see the boundaries between research-room and classroom as porous. Furthermore, their level of contact with me might have affected their peer relationships, adding into potentially culturally-variant constructions of teacher student relationships. I needed to take care from the outset, therefore, to stress the

neutrality of participation in the project. Moreover, the research process depended on the institution's understanding of the integrity of lecturer-student relationships. To this end, careful discussions with academic colleagues and research participants were incorporated into the initial stages and at regular intervals throughout the data-collection period. The key issue was to ensure that I obtained informed consent from participants before the interviews began.

Research in a second-language

Throughout the project, I needed to develop particular sensitivity to language, especially during the early stages, since participants were both newly-arrived in a foreign country and working in a second-language. I had to ensure that I provided clear and unambiguous information. Respecting the sensitivities around the collection and use of data discussed above, I also made the confidential and non-attributable status of the research information clear.

Limitations: a summary

1. ***A solo project***. I worked on the project as a sole researcher, on a part-time basis. Time and manageability implications have already been discussed, together with the effects on the reflective aspects of the work. Essentially, since I worked alone, the study design was deliberately limited, and small-scale.

2. ***An opportunity sample***. An inevitable limitation. As noted above, involvement in the project was voluntary. This condition affected the potential generalisability. Since the project was intended as mainly illustrative and professionally-reflective, however, the sample composition did not seriously disadvantages the project's rigour.

3. ***Time and access.*** The design incorporated regular interviews, on an approximately monthly schedule. The flows of the workload in the academic semesters, however, my lone-researcher status, participants' availability and their willingness to make time from a demanding schedule, meant a more irregular pattern emerged. This needed careful management. Ultimately, the number of interviews achieved from each participant varied. In addition, three participants dropped out of the project before completion. I have incorporated an assessment

of this in the analysis. Such attrition was unsurprising, however, especially when participants freely volunteered to take part. The overall richness and volume of data collected during the study enabled it to remain valid.

4. ***Change of status***. I changed my employment approximately half-way through the work, which inevitably limited my routine contact with participants, and potentially prevented completion of the work. By this stage, however, I had already obtained an average of four interviews from each participant and developed relationships robust enough to withstand the change. Participants who dropped out had already done so by this stage and I no longer routinely taught the group. I renegotiated institutional access and visited three times for interviews, according to the pre-planned schedule. Participants maintained contact with me by email and telephone. Ultimately, this change made relatively little difference to the completion of the research.

Research plan

The work was composed of 4 stages

1. Pre-study preparation: Background and contextual investigation

At this stage, the research focused on project-planning, and exploring the literature about Chinese and British education (see chapter two), in order to contextualize policy and practice in both countries. In addition, I sought institutional permission for the project and developed the initial design. I also piloted the survey (Turner, 2000).

2. Initial background survey.

As early as possible (October). I conducted a survey of PG students in the Business School. The aim was two-fold. First, the survey provided preliminary contextual data in which to ground the later phases of the project and to develop themes and issues for further exploration. Second, it was a useful mechanism for introducing the project to potential interviewees, providing a legitimate public focus for its conduct. The survey included all PG students, both domestic and international, and recorded basic biographical data, previous educational history and provided opportunities for the students to reflect on and record their ideas and expectations about teaching and

learning in a UK university **(appendix three)**. A second tranche of survey data was collected from final-year undergraduate students as a control group for UK/Chinese comparisons. The selection of this group, discussed further in chapter four, was governed by the low numbers of UK PG. students in the School and represented the best-available comparator.

Survey information was analyzed shortly after collection and, as well as giving some impetus for the first interview discussions, also generated themes and issues to explore throughout the year. The rationale for this approach lay in the broad scope of a large-scale survey to generate information and to assist in the development of initial structural hypotheses for further investigation (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The sample size for the survey necessarily needed to be as large as possible. It was impossible to predict, however, the number of students who would agree to participate. Questionnaires were handed out in largely-populated lecture sessions, to ensure high responses.

Survey data was used for illustrative and contextual purposes rather than for more substantive analysis. Not only were students newly-arrived in the UK and at UH - no more than weeks and maybe even days before - but differing cultural attitudes to personal disclosure, discussed above, applied particularly to written information and were likely to affect the survey's reliability. Nonetheless, it yielded insights into students' initial conceptions of HE, and supplemented the project's richer, substantive data collection methods.

A further issue affecting the survey was the language medium. At point of entry, the majority of international students possessed functional but basic English language skills (IELTS 5.5-6.5 equivalent). Their ability to interpret complex questions of motivation and emotion was limited. The initial survey needed to employ simple, direct questions and was, therefore, relatively limited.

3. Sample selection and main interview schedule

After the initial survey, an interview group was selected. The selection process took place at a meeting to which I invited all Chinese PG. Students. During the meeting, I briefly outlined the project and answered questions. I also provided a written project

brief (**appendix four**). I asked volunteers to contact me and to complete a brief biographical questionnaire (**appendix five**). For the sake of manageability, the sample was confined to a maximum of 10 students. Language capability was the only significant limitation on participation. I ensured that I talked with all potential participants individually to ensure that they would be able to approach the interviews confidently. I set up interviews with those who agreed to take part shortly after the meeting, during which I discussed matters of consent and the implications of participation with each person.

The main interviews took place approximately once a month, subject to each participant's willingness and the academic timetable. As far as possible, I ensured that interviews coincided with key events in the academic calendar. All participants were engaged in a very demanding schedule, with more than 16 hours of lectures and seminars a week, together with in-sessional English training. Nonetheless, the project's over-arching methodology suggested that the richest information would be obtained from regular contact with participants to capture the behavioural nuances and subtle changes over time (Various from Ellis and Bochner 1996). Working with people who derived from a highly relationship-based culture also increased the need for contact. The once-a-month schedule seemed, therefore, the most balanced approach.

The pattern of approximately six interviews emerged as follows:

First impressions.

To discuss participants' first take on study in the UK and any changes in their expectations after one month of study.

After one term: before Christmas.

To discuss personal and academic progress and explore preparations for initial assessments.

January: exams and dissertation preparation

A post-vacation, post-assessment discussion, also investigating first thoughts about the dissertation.

February: beginning of semester B

An exploration of progress 'half-way' through.

March / April: second assessments and preparing for Easter

Contrasting first and second assessments; reflecting on future plans.

May/ June: the end of the year

Reflections on the completion of the programme, examinations, final assessments and the overall experiences of the year.

Discussion of the research design

Design and data-collection methods

It is important to reconfirm the contextual flow informing the pattern and orientation of the research strategy. Individual researchers may develop preferences for particular research orientations within quantitative or qualitative perspectives, sometimes determined by the individual or by historical custom and disciplinary practices. The fundamental research question, however, that essentially gives a project form (Punch 1998, Cohen and Mannion 1994). The qualitative frame often deals with social questions which are too complex and include too many variables to conform to study within the narrower prescriptions of experimental, quantitative methods (Strauss and Corbin 1998). This is perhaps especially true when dealing with processual studies, examining life changes and choices. Here the control of external variables required by a quantitative orientation would isolate study "subjects" from the very environmental complexity that engender the phenomena of interest. This project, with its Janus-like focus on both past and future, was an example of the "openness' and "messiness" leading to a qualitative orientation. The complexity of human experiences, the large number of variables and the necessary lack of control over the research environment placed the work firmly in the qualitative domain.

Phenomenological foundations

Constructing the project through an interpretative orientation was important. Not only did it emphasize participants' implicit, insider perspectives but it also unified both the group – Chinese students in a different cultural setting to their own – and the aims of

the project. These were to generate insight rather than hard and fast theoretical perspectives. As noted in Ellis and Bochner (1996. P.16), the aim of interpretivism is to deal in perspectives on life, not expert answers. Grounded in cultural theory, dealing with a culturally-disparate group, therefore, the interpretative perspective offered particular benefits to this study.

Design and literature

The scarcity of literature in this area, especially concerned with Chinese student experience, strongly suggested a phenomenological approach to the work, supporting a perspective which viewed Chinese students as a separate university sub-culture. The initial survey, therefore, aimed to elicit views from a large sample to generate interview themes and with which to explore the existing literature during analysis. As Measor and Woods note (1991. p.60), research design in qualitative projects is open-ended and ongoing. The open-ended nature of this project was particularly evident, given the potentially wide range of individual responses to the UK educational experience and the variance that might exist between institutions. The study's aim was to achieve a rich range of data, highlighting the fullness of individual experience, while at the same time reflecting generally on similarities or trends in the group. I did not intend to produce a deterministic model to predict behaviour, but meaningful insights into individual motivation and choice.

Researching implicit theories and behaviour: changes from inside or outside ?

One of the key research challenges of a project focusing on implicit theories of learning was the degree to which it was researching internally-generated behavioural impulses or just describing observable changes in physical behaviour over time. As previously discussed, the notion of implicit theories carries with it a loading that all previous experiences causally influence current behaviour and that new experiences are cognitively-internalized into a dynamic, complex, and highly personal, model of behaviour. This research needed to avoid, however, automatically *taking for granted* the fact that all previous educational experiences uniformly contributed to participants' constructs of learning. The complexity of the cause-effect relationship was too great to allow such simplistic comparisons. In addition, the determination of 'causes' is highly subjective and largely dependant on individual perceptions of significance vis-a-vis new situations. Research items needed to reflect individual

perceptions of significance, in addition to illuminating general beliefs and values drawn from educational life histories. An additional challenge existed here, since participants were unlikely to be conscious of their "implicit theories". Balancing directed and open questioning became important during the interviews. It was also essential to explore the research from a number of different perspectives. This was supported by the use of different data-collection methods outlined in the design: surveys, observations, and individual interviews, as well as building into the literature.

Such considerations, dealing with intra-personal awareness in the development of implicit theories of learning, further reinforced the adoption of a qualitative rationale. Punch (1998) identifies the strength of qualitative methods in investigating complex social or personal questions. The essentially idiographic character of the qualitative frame supports its use as the umbrella approach to the project. At the same time, the "theoretical" aspects of the basic notion of implicit theories also implies opportunities for richness in pursuing more generalisable trends. Schofield (1993, p 92) notes the tendency for qualitative researchers to reject generalisability entirely from the research frame but argues a strong case for developing structures which enhance generalisability. There was a balance to be sought in this study, therefore, through attempts to understand the highly-individualized frame of reference through which each participant shaped new educational experiences and the degree to which similar experiences shared with a similarly-socialized group resulted in similar responses.

Data collection, interpretation and analysis

Interpretative emphasis

As identified above, the data used for analysis within this project was multi-stranded. The majority of the data was drawn from the interviews which took place throughout the study period. The interview data was supplemented by the results of the two initial surveys which took place in October and April and the journal and observation notes which I made mainly during the first stages of the work, when I was able to observe the participants' behaviour in the classroom and was developing the research mechanisms intensively. Taken as a whole this data provided a rich resource of information from which to explore the narrative accounts made by each of the

participants, and with which to investigate further both the pictures of Chinese learners and models of learner and learning within UK HE as presented by the literature. The overall analytical approach remained interpretative rather than quantitative in nature, but limited use of descriptive statistics was made to investigate the survey data and to inform commentary. The following section broadly describes the results achieved from each of the components of the project, in approximately the chronological order in which they were obtained. A more detailed assessment of the results accompanies the data analysis in the following chapters.

Initial survey

The survey was first given to the postgraduate student cohort of which the core Chinese student group was a part. The questionnaires were given out in October, at the beginning of the academic year and returned on the same day. Altogether 40 responses were returned, from every student in the cohort. A full breakdown of the composition of the group and the results obtained are shown in detail at **appendix six**.

The core survey group was predominantly international, with only 3 students coming from the UK. This mix of students reflected the population profile of the postgraduate courses from which the study drew its main group but did not offer an adequate comparator from the university's majority UK population against which to set the data from the Chinese group. Therefore an additional survey was undertaken in January of 83 UK final-year undergraduate students studying Business and Management within the School. This group most closely represented a general UK student profile at the point of entry to a pre-experience Master's degree as was possible to obtain at the time. Naturally the group could not provide a complete comparison for Chinese students, but was able to act in a reasonably representative manner for the ideas and expectations of UK students in the university. Though imposed by the low UK postgraduate numbers available to participate in the survey, the general comparisons obtainable were useful particularly because the survey was only intended to lend broad, illustrative background to the main interview data and to illuminate themes within the literature rather than substantive analysis. It was also possible to use this data in drawing comparisons because the postgraduate cohort making up the main focus of the work were studying on a pre-experience Master's degree, the vast majority of whom had progressed to this programme directly from

graduation from a first degree. The compatibility of the two groups in terms of stage of life profiles, educational expectations and broadly similar experiences was, therefore, reasonable.

The data from the core postgraduate responses was classified into 5 general groups, based on country or region of origin: UK, European Union (EU), other International students (a broad classification of students from a wide range of non-EU countries including India, Malaysia, Thailand, Ghana and Nigeria), Chinese nationals (PRC) and other ethnic Chinese (only 1 student). The PRC group composed 25% of the sample, the majority of which went on to participate in the rest of the study. These groups were selected as a basis for classification because of the low numbers represented by individual ethnic groups on the programme, apart from the PRC students, which would have inhibited quantitative analysis of the results.

Interview data

The interviews constituted the bulk of the substantive data collection, totalling approximately 50 hours of taped data which was transcribed and analyzed thematically. This was made up to a total of 43 interviews, averaging 5 interviews with each of the participants who remained in the study for more than three months. As discussed above, one of the biggest challenges to the study was the high-maintenance nature of this kind of longitudinal study, since the research sample was populated entirely by volunteers. This meant that 2 students relinquished their involvement at various times in January, when one participant left the university to return home and March (1 student) when work on the dissertation began in earnest and I left the institution to take up another post. Of the original 9 participants, however, 6 gave 5 or 6 interviews each. Of the interview group, 4 participants continued to maintain personal contact with me for some time after the completion of the study by email or in person, a set of contacts which remain in place today. **Appendix seven** provides a full sample transcript of one of the participant's interviews. **Appendix eight** gives a brief summary of their current situations and the last known information about the remainder.

Notes and observations

The journal notes and observations that I made during the project acted as both a supplement to the other forms of data collection and as an articulation of the development of my orientation to the project and the methodology as it progressed through the year. The notes were organized chronologically, with eleven separate entries of varying length made between October and May in the study period. The first section of the notes, made during Semester One when I was teaching the participants, made observations about their behaviour in the classroom as well as considering the progress of the project in a journal fashion. The second section of the notes, after I finished teaching the students and when I had left the institution, were exclusively focused on the project itself. Very much a minor part of the overall work, these notes nonetheless provided some additional commentary on the project and the participants' views and development over time, as well as making my presence in the work explicit. They also acted as something of a 'dumping ground' for worries and anxieties that I had during the conduct of the project which was a particularly helpful means of recording my views about the work as it progressed, especially when I was considering the power-dynamics within the lecturer / researcher - student relationships. This was helpful at the time because I was carrying out the work as a sole researcher and found the process of thinking through and writing down the journal notes an effective way of clarifying my position and resolving methodological or personal issues presented by the work. It was also helpful afterwards during the analysis as a prompt to remembering these concerns at a later date and incorporating them in the overall interpretation. Overall, therefore, the contribution of these notes, though limited in scope made some useful contributions to the final shape of the analysis.

Orientation to the analysis

As noted earlier, the notion of implicit theories relies heavily on the uniquely personal nature of individual experience. On the other hand, the group case study approach, such as the one used here, can provide rich insights into personal experience and might lead to identification of key trends and influences in experience which ramify to common ranges of behaviour (Stake 1994). In addition, approaches to analysis in the project necessarily needed to preserve openness and lend themselves to sufficient ranges of interpretation to prevent prescriptive, normative quasi-conclusions emerging

from the data sets. For this reason, quantitative analytical techniques were confined to descriptive analyses of the shared or contrasting experiences within the survey sample in order to highlight themes for discussion and development with the interview group rather than to penetrate more substantive discussion of motivation or emotionally complex aspects of the implicit theory and behaviour change. For discussion of these aspects of the work, I aimed to report interviewees perceptions directly, supported by interpretive analysis of the individual and collective accounts provided by the participants in the study. This approach reinforces the qualitative-dominant framework of the project strategy since the methods of analysis rather than the methods of data collection tend to determine whether an instrument takes a quantitative or qualitative character (Denzin and Lincoln, 1996).

As noted above, the questionnaire data was employed to act as a commentary on the picture of Chinese and UK learning that had begun to emerge from my readings of the literature. In this way, it was able to generate themes and issues for discussion during the interviews and to inform the subsequent analysis of the interview data at the end of the data collection period. The analysis organized the interview data in a three-dimensional way. First, the data was explored to open up discussions with the participants about their previous learning experiences in China. The influences of those experiences on their ongoing expectations of learning were then analyzed to reveal themes and issues common to the experiences of all or the majority of participants in the study in relation to their orientation towards teaching and learning in the UK. Third, both as a group and as individuals, the transcripts were analyzed to see if the participants revealed any developments in their orientation or attitudes to learning over time and whether or not those changes resulted from what they had encountered in the UK. Each of the themes and items were first noted and encoded within the transcript data and then a cumulative thematic picture was developed as each subsequent transcript was explored. After this initial analysis, the transcripts and analysis were put to one side for several weeks and then analyzed again to check out the ongoing validity of the themes and issues first identified. This was done as an effort to ensure that my own interpretive frame was not imposed inconsistently or excessively on the information that the interviews revealed. At the same time, the analysis remains subjective and personal throughout, very much providing a rich

picture about the interviewees from my own perspective rather than posing to act in a more generalisable or substantive manner.

The final stage of the data analysis was to explore the interview transcripts and the themes that emerged from the data as a whole against my journal notes and the early observations I made of the participants' behaviour in the classroom. These notes were used to act as a supplement and commentary on the student narratives in the interviews, at times in a contrasting manner, setting observed behaviour against perception. In the main, however, these notes were incorporated into the overall interpretation as part of the reflective elements of the work, not only to record how my own thoughts and ideas about the teaching may have changed during the course of the project but also as a prompt to reflection during the main part of the analysis of the data as a whole.

Data volume and quality

Taken as a whole, the data gathered for the project provided a useful mixture of sources and methods which could be aggregated in a kind of qualitative triangulation, using external viewpoints in the questionnaire, insider perspectives in the interviews and a reflective and observational element in the journal notes. The individual elements of the data collection, therefore, operated in a mutually-reinforcing manner and strengthened the overall quality of the data achieved. Nonetheless the volume of the data collection was considerably higher at the beginning of the research cycle than at the end, when considering all methods used and this needed to be taken into account in the analysis in order to ensure that the interpretation remained balance and consistent as a reflection of the real nature of the work. In spite of this limitation. the richness of the data obtained over the course of the 8 months of the data collection period remains considerable.

Conclusion

The project design, data-collection and interpretation strategies needed to satisfy a complex brief. The study was concerned not only with individual perceptions of educational experience but also focused on collective inter-cultural patterns of learning. The strengths of the qualitative framework for exploring such complex and

subjective questions was considerable. Nonetheless, the very openness of the construction of the project and its qualitative framework had the potential to undermine its value as a piece of research. In addition, the interpersonal nature of the data-collection methods and the implicit power-relationships between researcher and participants required great sensitivity to overcome to allow participants' own voices to emerge from the text. On the other hand, the interpersonal quality of the work also created one of the project's greatest strengths, as it gave me the opportunity to glimpse insights into the thoughts and feelings of students whom I taught. In particular, the project's longitudinal facilitated the evolution of reflective relationships which generated the themes and concerns of the work to a full degree. As a piece of process-research, the greatest methodological strength of the project was in its participation over time and the opportunity that each meeting gave to me to achieve cumulatively-richer insights into participants' thoughts and feelings. The design of the work, therefore, most fully contributed to the generation of its outcomes and enabled it to move ahead in an open and dynamic manner.

Chapter 4: Discussion of results

Introduction

This chapter presents discussion and analysis of the data collected during the project. It begins with an assessment of the initial survey data, collected in October, while the main section draws out an interpretation of the interviews that took place over the course of the academic year. The analysis ends with a broader discussion, drawing together the major themes in the literature review and issues emerging from both the survey and the interview data. The main purpose of the final discussion is to illuminate the study's primary research questions. The first of these: how do the participants respond to study in the UK, and what are the common themes that collectivize the participants' experiences, are drawn out in the detail of the students' accounts and reinforced in discussion of the other questions. The following two questions, focusing on the resonance between the participants' accounts and the literature about China and UK orientations to teaching and learning, especially in the area of implicit theories, are drawn together in the later sections of discussion in the chapter. The chapter ends with a short reflective assessment of my own learning and development, stemmed from the project, responding to the themes of the final reflective research question.

The initial survey

Aims

The basic purpose of the survey was threefold. First, to generate themes to explore at more depth with the interview group through the year and second to draw primary data from which to substantiate or comment on the themes that emerged from the literature. The third aim of the survey was to enable limited comparisons between the profile of the Chinese students at the university and the UK students, developing comparative insights about both the interview data and as a backdrop to the more substantive explorations that would take pace through the rest of the year.

Discussion of the results

The analysis of the results (**appendix six**) was relatively simple, predominantly organized by the use of descriptive statistics and taxonomies of the responses received. Such an analysis facilitated the emergence of a general picture of the attitudes explored through the individual items, but did not place too great a significance on the substantive nature of the results. This limitation was important, given the purpose of the questionnaire and the size and distribution of the sample, both from the international postgraduate cohort and the UK undergraduate control group. Nonetheless a number of interesting themes and issues of significance which were later explored with the students began to emerge. Strikingly, the comparison with the UK undergraduate group showed some clear differences in the patterning of ideas and expectations of HE from those of both the Chinese students and the other international groups.

First, the form of the initial question about previous educational experience added some legitimacy to the underlying assumptions operating within the project. 87% of the PG respondents had previously studied at degree level within their own countries and a further 10% at vocational colleges. This previous experience of HE in some context either UK or international enabled all the respondents to have developed some view about the nature of HE, based on these experiences and therefore, validated their answers to the rest of the questions.

Responses to the questions about the basic purpose of HE showed a broad consensus view that correlated general cognitive development or 'maturing thinking skills' among the PG group. This was balanced by a much stronger vocational ascription of purpose that linked into the cognitive development profile held by the UK students, who showed an equal focus on HE as learning about thinking and HE as the pathway to improving specific employment skills. The UK students also showed a strikingly higher perception of the utility of HE with more than 30% focussing on certification as the main purpose of studying at university. To some degree these differences might be ascribed to the difference between those finishing a vocational undergraduate degree and undertaking a postgraduate qualification. At the same time, however, this view needed to be balanced by the profile of the postgraduate respondents, the majority of whom had moved directly to postgraduate study on

completion of their undergraduate degrees the previous summer. In this respect, the basic 'point of life' comparison between the two groups was broadly similar, reinforcing the differences between the two. It was also an interesting commentary on the focus in the literature of international students and the 'diploma disease' (Humfrey, 1999), since the levels of responses within this category seemed the reverse of the expectations that the literature might generate. The PRC group's responses were broadly similar to those of the rest of the PG cohort and seemed consistent with the generalist notions of education encouraged by the Chinese education literature. It was also striking that none of the groups focused on learning as fun or pleasurable, but appeared to take a more instrumental view about the process and purpose or study.

Moving on in more detail to the purposes of learning, the UK / PRC comparison becomes clearer. In response to these questions, the UK students showed an emphasis on practical skills and expertise, followed by the ability to see a range of viewpoints (part of critical thinking development), with relatively little emphasis on the idea of knowledge for the mastery of a subject. The PRC group, however, showed an equal focus on the acquisition of knowledge as well as practical skills attainment. Given that the Chinese group was undertaking a major exercise in the practical acquisition of a second language, the emphasis on some element of practical skills development was to be expected. However, broadly, the differences in response seemed to support the view in the literature about the Chinese privileging of knowledge-acquisition and a tendency towards a unitarist construction of knowledge. In addition, the higher scores for both PRC and international students which linked learning to confidence were interesting, especially given that the margin of difference was about a third higher than the level expressed by UK students. These responses foreshadowed a number of the themes that emerged during the interview data and the link between self-confidence and effective engagement with learning seemed particularly strong. For all groups, the absence of factual memorization as a key aspect of learning was interesting, especially given the dominance in the literature about Chinese learning as factual memorization or repetition. At this stage, the questionnaire did not engage deeply with explorations of any complex models of learning that students possessed and so the rationale for these responses were unclear. For example, students might have distinguished between *processes* and *purposes* of learning or may not have deconstructed models of learning in any deep way, both of which could have

influenced the responses to the question. However, the opening-up of this theme provided opportunities to explore these issues much further during the interviews.

Responses to the next cluster of questions about the nature and duration of learning showed some interesting dimensions in the differing models of learning among student groups. First, there was a strong and unsurprising consensus about the ongoing nature of learning through the lifetime. Nonetheless this question did highlight that aspect of the literature about Chinese attitudes towards education as focused on the young. It is clear from the responses, however, that the broad definition of learning contained not only formal but also informal forms of learning and this explained the universal view describing the processes of learning as lifelong. The key differences that emerged between the groups focused on the practical versus the intellectual nature of learning and reinforced the experience-driven views expressed by UK respondents in question 2. Here 70% of UK students privileged practical experience over formal learning, while the Chinese and international groups focused on the continuous processes of learning as indicated in the previous question. This emphasis on continuing to learn was more strongly emphasised by the Chinese group than by any others which tended to polarize the UK emphasis on practical experience and the Chinese emphasis on intellectual learning. In terms of the balance between natural ability and environmental stimulus, the Chinese group showed a strong preference for the idea that everyone could develop as learners in their lives and that the environment played an important role in learning development. This view tended to eschew the view that natural ability could provide a privileged learning development in life. The UK responses on the other hand showed a stronger preference for the idea that natural ability differentiated learning development and showed very low responses for an emphasis on environment. These responses resonated with the literature quite strongly in a number of ways. First, they tended to support the notion that, culturally, Chinese students equated success and ability with hard work rather than natural talent, which was given more emphasis in UK theories of learning. Second, it tended to reinforce the more egalitarian context of Chinese education policy and society which notionally at least focuses on a socialist equality of access and treatment of all learners in the education process.

The next set of questions moved to consideration of the locus of learning for each individual. Again the survey data illuminated the expectations raised by the literature in interesting ways. In response to the question 'where does learning happen mostly', UK students showed a spread of answers but a key focus on the practical aspects of the learning process of learning achieved by undertaking assignments or preparing for examinations. Chinese students, on the other hand, showed a close grouping of results and a greater focus on listening to the lecturers and talking with peers informally outside of the class - neither of which were at all high on the UK students list. This set up an interesting potential contrast in approaches to learning which, again, resonated with the literature. All groups privileged reading and thinking alone - the individualist approach to learning development - but the PRC group's responses to this construction of learning were higher than for other groups in the sample. Again foreshadowing the interview responses, the questionnaire responses suggested that conversations about assessment and assignments might be something that the Chinese students would bring into the project since their responses in this case showed a low regard for this kind of learning, a method which is frequently emphasized in UK HE. Another interesting aspect of this pattern was the lack of emphasis in the Chinese student answers on working in student groups, a response that figured more highly than listening to the lecturer for both international and UK student groups. To some extent this was balanced by Chinese responses about informal working with peers, but certainly set out a different set of experiences and potential expectations to the rest of the respondents.

The following set of questions probed personal responsibility for the learning process. The first question yielded unsurprising raw results, showing that all groups of students located responsibility for learning either lying entirely with the individual student or within a partnership between student and lecturer. However, both the international and PRC groups showed that some students believed that the lecturer carried responsibility for the effective learning process alone, a response which was entirely absent in the UK answers. Inevitably this affected the strength of responses that supported the other two options available with the consequence that UK students placed more of an emphasis on the student as responsible for learning, either solely or in partnership and the PRC students placed more of an overall emphasis on the lecturer as responsible in some part for the learning process. These initial views

were developed further in the following question which discussed the nature of the relationship between student and lecturer. The majority of UK answers ascribed a professional, friendly but distant relationship as characterizing the lecturer-student connection while for PRC students, 89% of responses described the relationship as open and friendly, involving both professional and personal, social contact. The next question in this cluster focused on the particular responsibilities of the lecturer in the learning process. And the results were again interesting. For none of the student groups - and more pronounced in its absence for the PRC group than any other - did the lecturer stand as an expert, imparting knowledge to the students. This is interesting, given the dominance of this view as a stereotype of the Chinese teacher in much of the literature (Cortazzi and Jin, 2001), and certainly supporting more recent work which tends to refute this image as simplistic (Mok, 2001). Rather for the PRC group, the lecturer acted as a guide and mentor into the learning process, supporting the students own personal development. This again emphasised the personalized nature of the lecturer-student relationship and the individual nature of the student's learning progression. In some respects this view seemed contrary to expectations which might develop when considering the apparently authoritarian, didactic role of the lecturer inside the formal setting of a Chinese classroom. Instead, however, it developed the rounded idea of the Confucian teacher in its cultural context. Certainly it highlighted an area in which Chinese students might potentially struggle with the comparatively formal and distant relationships that exist between lecturers and student in the UK environment. Another aspect highlighted here was the active role of the lecturer in the student's learning process. PRC students, in particular, did not recognize the independence of their own learning or a facilitative role for the lecturer. Instead the emphasis was on active personal guidance in which the lecturer provided opinions and direct support for the development of their learning. Interestingly the comparison with the UK group appeared counterintuitive, with UK students putting more of an emphasis on the lecturer as expert than the PRC students. However, the sample sizes involved here mitigate against making any but very tentative conclusions about this aspect of the question, since the numbers involved in this particular aspect of the question were relatively low. The remaining results seemed consistent with the models of the two groups generated in the literature review. As noted above, Chinese students emphasized lecturer as guide and friend while UK students focused on the lecturer as an external resource providing a range of opinions from which the student

made their own development. Taken as a whole , these responses presented some of the most pronounced differences in the UK / PRC profiles and clearly reflected some of the expectations that the literature sets up about the traditional Confucian model of teacher (He, 1998; Reed, 1988; Lin, 1993; Chen, 1994) and which is endorsed by the socialist collective model developed since the institution of universal education in the PRC (SEC, 1996a, c, d). Linked together these responses suggest a culturally different classroom dynamic in HE between the UK and the PRC - a theme that emerged quite strongly in the interview data that developed over the ensuing months.

The next set of questions focused on the nature and purpose of assessment in HE. When taken at its most basic, all the student groups showed a strong faith in the functional validity of assessment as a way of measuring their skills attainment. Such an emphasis was perhaps unsurprising, given the emphasis on external assessment measures in both Chinese and UK education. There was, however, what was perhaps a surprising lack of cynicism about assessment and what it could deliver, though this initially optimistic view was challenged somewhat by the responses to later questions in the set. In terms of considering the effectiveness of particular assessment methods, however, the patterns of response between groups diverged somewhat. In spite of a universal preference for coursework and assessment over examinations, the PRC group showed a more even spread between examinations, presentations and written assessments compared to other groups. The UK group in particular privileged written essays more than the other two groups. In particular the lack of responses for self-assessment methods was interesting. This could have resulted from a lack of exposure to self-assessment methods - the PRC group in particular would not have experienced this before - but certainly the responses to the assessment question as a whole highlighted an interesting area for further exploration with the interview group. The following questions, developing perceptions about the effectiveness of clusters of assessments compounded this focus on assessment. The results for opinions about formal assessment were similar in focus for all groups, but the PRC group showed a smaller spread of results than the other two. This viewpoint was repeated in the question about informal assessment. Taken overall, the Chinese group showed a much stronger focus on the effectiveness of all kinds of assessment than other groups in the survey and a tendency to avoid positions which devalued assessment altogether. To some extent, the forced choice structure of the question encouraged this pattern of

responses. Nonetheless, the results overall revealed a consistent and strong belief in the value of assessment in the learning process as a way of measuring and recording learning. Given the ways in which assessment is used culturally in China, such a view was perhaps unsurprising and certainly these opinions resonated strongly with dominant themes in the literature about assessment in China.

The results obtained for the question about learning preferences provided an interesting contrast to the views expressed about confidence in assessment as a tool. The PRC group showed a split between enjoyment of lectures and enjoyment of practical experience-based learning and a much lower regard for small-group work and student-led activities. The UK group on the other hand expressed low regard for lectures and a much higher regard for both experience-based learning and for small-group tutorials. These results might have occurred because of relative exposure to these kinds of methods, especially given the lack of small-group teaching in the Chinese system. Nonetheless the divergence apparent in the patterns of preferred study highlighted potential areas for further exploration with the interview group In particular, the universally low scores for student-led group work were interesting. In spite of previous experience among the UK group, the student responses remained unappreciative of this approach. This theme recurred consistently in the interview data and indeed appeared to develop as a dominant viewpoint from all the students involved in the study through the year. The responses to this question also presented a contrast to the opinions expressed by PRC students about informal student buddying in an earlier question. It seemed to suggest a clear differentiation between the kind of informal student co-operation that might take place outside the classroom and cooperative student work within the formal classroom setting, suggesting that the student group differentiated its expectations and behaviour in each of these environments. In addition, the strong preferences expressed by all groups for practical ways of learning as opposed to more traditional formal methods of classroom-based learning were interesting, particularly given the limited opportunities for this kind of learning on the programmes on which the students were enrolled.

The final question in the set presented results that were unsurprising. Overall respondents from all groups felt that their HE studies had been effective in meeting their learning needs. The PRC group again clustered results in the middle two

sections - effective / ineffective - rather than showing a broader spread. The UK group's responses were a more unequivocal endorsement of the effectiveness of HE than for the rest of the group. This could have occurred for a number of reasons - time in the academic year or the cycle of the programme, a reflection of the social role and expectations of the benefits of HE which might differ from country to country, or a simple enthusiasm for the course of study. Especially for the PG. Groups, which were all premium-fee self-pay students, however, it would have been surprising to see results indicating a lack of faith in the HE process at the beginning of the academic year, so little effective conclusions were deduced from these responses.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the results to the questionnaire provided some interesting insights into the respective profiles of the Chinese and UK respondents and commentary on the student models developed from the literature. Overall, there seemed to be a relatively high resonance from the responses with the themes and issues raised in the literature about perceptions of teaching and learning and characteristics of the student profile both in China and the UK. Chinese students showed more enthusiasm for lectures and lecturers than their UK counterparts and a complex but clear dislike of student-led group working. They also showed a clear belief in the value of assessment as a way of measuring skills attainment and an individualistic orientation to learning compared to UK students. Such a reinforcement of the conclusions of the initial exploration of the literature coalesced the initial focus around the 'stereotypical' models of student learning for both the UK and the Chinese groups. They also illuminated a number of counter-intuitive themes and issues which were worthwhile exploring further in more detail with the interview group and gave a good prompt for the continuation of the project. As an illustrative framework, therefore, the initial survey usefully developed the emergent picture of Chinese students in general and gave impetus for the richer and more considered qualitative aspects of the substantive aspects of the interview work through the rest of the year.

The Interviews

Introduction

As discussed in the preceding chapters, the interviews took place at intervals through the academic year. The style of discussion was intentionally wide-ranging. The initial interview was the most structured, during which I asked particular questions about participants' personal and educational backgrounds to set the context for the rest of the project. In each successive interview, I also began the discussion with a request for a progress-report - reflections on events and perspectives over time. I asked about particular events in the academic calendar, such as first assignments, dissertation proposals etc, where relevant. Overall, each individual developed personal conversation themes and discussion points freely. For the majority of participants, this approach elicited a strong narrative account. Two participants required more specific questioning during some interviews, especially in early sessions because of their struggles with English. I have included some assessment of this and other language-related factors below.

The analysis that follows draws on the particular themes and issues that the student group raised with me. I have clustered the data thematically, attaching to either social and learning experiences. In some places, it has been difficult to separate the 'social' and the 'learning' content of the transcripts, however. For example, when each participant discussed group-work, they often focused on the social aspects of the relationships within reflections on learning. This blurring of themes was inevitable, given the broad range of each conversation. In a general sense, I have also presented the analysis in ways that roughly echo the pattern of the academic year, beginning with discussions about participants' backgrounds and previous educational experiences in China. In the direct quotations included in the text, I have preserved some idiosyncrasies in language usage but have clarified meaning where unclear. These changes are shown in brackets in the text.

The participants

Altogether nine students agreed to take part in the interviews, six women and three men. The average age of the participants was 23.3 years, the age range covering 22-

25, a fairly tight distribution. They came from a wide variety of locations across China, five from the mid-East of the country with Shanghai as the nearest big city and four from far-flung locations including the North-East and Beijing. All participants were unmarried. Four had previous work experience, averaging one year before joining the UH programme. Work experience had been gained in a mixture of international and domestic companies in China, in posts approximating to graduate-trainee / first-starter jobs. An exception was WS, who had worked as a university English teacher. The remainder of the group had graduated from degree courses in the summer preceding their arrival in the UK. In all, six had arrived in the UK in September, and three had participated in the university's pre-sessional English language programmes. In this respect, the students conformed to a fairly standard profile of those joining a pre-experience Master's degree in Business and Management, where no prior subject knowledge or substantial work experience is assumed prior to entry.

Domestic circumstances

The participants came from professional or entrepreneurial / managerial families, locating them in the emerging professional class in China. Parental occupations varied from work as government officials / managers in state-owned companies to work as a stock-broker in China's newly-emerging private financial sector. All the families placed considerable importance on the participant obtaining a higher degree and were instrumental in choosing either course of study and/or institution:

> Because my aunt's daughter and son, they all went overseas to study so this is a wish to my parents and I also want to study overseas (QWY, p.2)

> My parents think it is very useful for me to go abroad. And they think their children always according to their parents, and that everything should be arranged by their parents. They showed them how to be like themselves, so it is a good chance for me. (PT, p.8)

In some cases, the participants themselves showed little personal interest or enthusiasm for their subject of study, but were complying with parental will in participating in the programme:

> I ask my family whether I can go back to China looking for a job because I am holding a Hertfordshire degree although I was studying in Malaysia. But he think you only have a degree, do you have ideas to further your study, you are a guy, you should be higher... (LG, p2)

Such a high level of family involvement in a student's postgraduate study, while typical of the expectations raised in the literature about Chinese students and education (Turner and Acker, 2002; Zhu, 1999), did not reflect the profile of many British postgraduates in the UK. This factor perhaps predisposed participants to a different achievement orientation than their UK peers from the outset. Moreover, all of the students involved in the study had enjoyed high levels of family contact throughout their lives to date, either living in the family home or very nearby. With the exception of one participant, who had studied for an academic year in a Chinese college in Malaysia, most had no prior international travel or living experience before coming to Britain. In fact, the majority - six - had not lived outside the family home, with the exception for some of term-time living in university dormitories (where similarly to UK halls of residence, all basic needs are provided). The extent of personal learning that accompanied their departure for the UK, therefore, was considerable as they encountered a wide range of new domestic responsibilities within a foreign context, in addition to the regular demands of their studies. WS, for example, had previously lived in a university campus in China, where all his personal and catering needs were supplied. He showed considerable weight loss over the year, which he noted was the result of his inability to cook and afford to eat healthy food in the UK:

> I don't like the food here.....It is just like the eating habit is different compared with China....I don't know how to cook, so that it there problem.
>
> I: So how do you manage?
>
> WS: Maybe eat together with other Chinese students, or maybe eat out to McDonald's - high calories but I have no choice. I cannot cook so I have to go there....[Learning to cook] takes a lot of time and you can use that time to read or study or something. (WS, p.44. March 2002)

XJ's first interview devoted time to asking advice about billing with a UK mobile phone company, a situation which he regarded as the most pressing 'learning' issue confronting him. In another example, LG discussed his difficulties in understanding UK domestic arrangements in university accommodation - for example, in working the washing machine - as an indicator of his negative response to arrival in the UK and the poor quality of his experience:

> I'm new here, I know nothing and somebody told me I have to register in the police office and I have to do something, some injection - I have to see the doctor. Something like that. And they say you have to open a bank account and you have to do this and you have to do that. And I say, really? I don't know nothing. Even yesterday, I don't know how to do the laundry in Sele-mill [the student accommodation]. I don't know how to wash my clothes, nothing. (LG, p.7)

In many respects, therefore, these students conformed more to the life-stage patterns that UK universities might expect of first-year undergraduates than postgraduate students. Certainly participants themselves perceived that their personal learning was amplified, compared even to other international student groups, because of the need to grapple with basic lessons of personal independence as well as cultural and academic adaptation.

Previous education

The students had all been relatively successful in the Chinese education system and had obtained a university degree (7) or a vocational college diploma (2). The majority (7) had previously studied Business and Management or related subjects. One participant, LG, had completed a degree at a Chinese-Malaysian franchise operated by UH (2 years in China, one year in Malaysia). As successful scholars in the highly-competitive Chinese education environment, the students were well-versed in its disciplines and cultures of learning. Throughout the interviews they compared study in the UK and China. In recounting their experiences, their general commentary resonated strongly with the picture that emerges from the literature. For example:

> You know in China, I spent most of my time to talk with the teacher. The teacher will give me most of the advice, but here I try to study by myself...I think the tutors

in China will help you greatly...When I face an examination, the tutors in China will give you some suggestion which will involve the answer when you have the examination, so every time, the last two class in the semester is very important for most of the student. (XJ, p.6)

In China the lecturer will think if you do the coursework, you can use the book and maybe somebody can help you...I think in the lecturer's mind, they think...the quality of this course[work] cannot say what you have learned, it cannot examine what you have learned, and finally, the examination is the only way (PT, p5)

In China, the teacher always should tell people what they should do and how to do... The Chinese teachers always tell you, you should finish this! You should do like this! (PT, p.7)

In China the teachers always tell the students what to do, when to do, how to do, everything they will tell us! This is a big difference...Here in a lecture, when sometime the lecturer tell something, then we are divided into groups and we discuss in the groups. But in university in China, the whole lecture is the teacher saying. (QWY, p.3-4)

[In China], I think it is a nightmare during the high school...In our first year of study of high school, there was a student who suicide, a female. After you graduate from high school and go to university, you will realize there is no-one who will ask you to do anything. You do not have any work to do, so you are very relaxed. It is just like some person who works for many years and then he retired and he just like collapse. (WS, p. 7)

In China the high school, I think it is different from here because in the class only teacher tell you something about this, this and you don't need to talk. You just listen and do some coursework and it's okay. In England, you must work with group members and do some groupwork and you must talk in class. It is different, I think. (YMX, p.3)

In this respect, participants' stories establish them as reasonably within the student profiles drawn out in the literature. Certainly the similarity between their responses, both in descriptions of the system and their attitudes towards education, established a

strong sense of uniformity, going some way towards responding to research questions about the individual or collective nature of their previous experience. At the outset, at least, participants began with broadly similar perspectives on education, driven by their previous educational careers.

Part of this discussion highlighted participants' attitudes about the contribution that education made to their lives. Reflecting the themes drawn out in the literature (Biggs and Watkins, 2001), in a general sense, not only were the students relatively relaxed about their particular subject of study but also felt that no vocational correlation necessarily existed between education and career. Rather the emphasis was on good-quality educational credentials:

> It is very strange in China because it doesn't matter what you work for in the future, but what you learn should be popular. Maybe your job in the future will not be related to what you have learned...In China you can find so many who graduated from college or from some experience school, but their job is not related to what they have learned....high education can prove that you are a high quality man. (PT, p3-4)

The context of moving from China to the UK for this group of students, therefore, resonated strongly with the literature and the Chinese learner profiles drawn out in earlier chapters (including various in Biggs and Watkins, 1996, 2001; Cheng, 1994; Cheng et al, 1999, Galllagher, 1998). The students had been accustomed to a fairly didactic and teacher-centred environment, where student conformity and passivity had governed behaviour and where the learning context focused on practical employability only in a very general manner. Within the mechanics of the learning process, formality had stressed the internal rituals of the classroom, especially in terms of summative assessment by examination. Yet at the same time teachers and students had developed informal personal relationships, where close friendships were usual and where the teaching community was almost complicit in ensuring that students succeeded in external assessments. Given the frameworks, conventions and epistemological assumptions that govern UK HE - drawn out in the literature review - the early interview data set a clear context for further discussion of the groups' learning challenges as they progressed through their studies.

Motivations to study in the UK

One of the first discussion points in the opening interview followed up from the survey questions about the participants' perceptions of the basic purpose of HE. We discussed why they had come to Britain to their chosen programme of study. For most, the main motivations included improving English language skills and gaining some experience of living overseas, more than a specific ambition to study Business and Management:

> For my life I want to keep change environment. I want to know new people, I like it. And I want to stay in different place. I like travel, so I like changing things. So I think it is helpful for my life. I have a lot of experience. (YB, p.4)

For many, as noted above, participants' parents made the decision, highlighting potentially differing levels of family involvement in the process for postgraduates than might be usual for UK students. It also underlined students' expressed sense of a collective burden of responsibility to succeed academically, instead of working solely to fulfill their individual motivations (Zhu, 1999; Bond, 1986, 1991).

The duration of the course was also an important consideration, often financially motivated. This was because UK taught-master's study is 1-year compared with the 2-years more typical in other Anglophone countries:

> Some people discuss how do you plan for further study, why do you go to the UK and not Australia, US, or New Zealand? US two years, Australia two years to get a Master. UK only one year... So what they want is a course as short as possible. (LG, p.9)

> At first, I thought I want to study, I want to pursue my post-graduate in China. I know the entrance examination is very difficult and the time is long. You must spend two and a half years to get your degree, so I choose to come to overseas and I choose the UK because I think the UK's education is the highest in the world...[and] it is one year! I can save my time (YMX, p.4)

Such mixed motivations highlighted the extent to which participants came to the UK with a utilitarian, and perhaps 'dilute' academic motivation. To a large extent their

motivations were unrelated to the programme itself and were either pragmatic or stemmed from aspirations extrinsic to the degree or learning process. These factors, linked with evidence about the unexpected demands participants found in their studies, provided some contextual support for the development of somewhat instrumental or 'satisficing' approaches to learning. Equally, participants universally regarded the acquisition of an 'overseas' experience as important, conferring perceived competitive advantage in the employment market. This composed a major aspect of their initial decision-making.

Some explanation of this might be found in commentaries such as that of Huang Jianyi (1997) in her discussion of Chinese students in the USA desiring to return home to China 'gold-coated' (*du jin*). Given the PRC's historic restrictions on international travel, the particular study discipline may, therefore, have seemed relatively unimportant compared to the value of simple exposure to the outside world. Paradoxically, the selection of Business courses was at least in part a vocational choice, however, because of perceived improvements in general employability. Such a pragmatic position flowed from perceptions of the implicit competitiveness in China's employment market:

> I concerned the competition in China, you know, more and more degrees and the labour market is full. If I have the diploma and certification to join the human resource market, I can't get a good job...There are too many diplomas, too many degree. (XJ, p.3-4)

> In China because of a lot of people, a large population, so very, very big competition. (YB, p.2)

Taken as a whole, participants were ambitious and desired to enhance their personal and financial status through gaining a master's qualification. Except in the broadest sense of acquiring valuable international experience, therefore, the group showed little of the stereotypical Western 'liberal' love for higher learning for its own sake. Instead, they were strongly utilitarian in their perspective towards education and learning and specifically to embarking on their particular programmes of study. In some respects, this reflected consumer perceptions about education and learning, a

value-for-money focus which threaded through many accounts, particularly when participants expressed dissatisfaction with the course or their general experiences. Nonetheless, these attitudes mainly emerged from perceptions about the particular dynamics of Chinese society, where - with an underdeveloped social and welfare framework - each generation becomes responsible for the support of their family elders. In this way, participants' attitudes reflected both the practical and philosophical realities of the historical Confucian and contemporary Socialist collective discussed in the literature review.

In this context, it is interesting to note that of the original nine participants, at least three (who maintained contact with me) chose to remain in the UK after completion of their course of study, one without a change in visa status (and therefore illegally) in order to work in the UK, and two to continue with further studies and then into employment (legal status unknown). This pattern resonated with historical trends showing that only about one third of students who study overseas return home to China (Yan, 1998; China Daily, 2001). It further underlined the non-academic motivations some participants revealed. Undertaking a programme of study in the UK certainly figured as an important life-decision, but the particular importance it held for them connected as much to broad life-choices and potential future status than a strictly vocational or educational decision.

Another subtle but powerful aspect of participants' desire to acquire overseas experience lay in the area of personal identity and individualism. WS, for example - in addition to seeking to understand 'western' lifestyle and to improve in English language skills - said that he sought the opportunity to develop as a self-determining individual in a way which, he believed, could not happen within his existing family and personal relationships:

> I want to try and be myself. I want to get out of the shade of my father's and mother's and my friendships, in order to do something by myself...Because according to the traditional culture of China we live together with our parents for so many years so sometimes we couldn't manage something by ourselves. (WS, p.4)

For him, there were powerful considerations about the transformational potential of time spent outside China, which appeared to exert an influence over a range of personal choices that he made, such as social activities and relationships. It also influenced the philosophical perspective he embraced regarding the various set-backs and challenges he encountered, personally and academically. To some extent, the high value he placed on the opportunity to study in the UK helped him to maintain confidence and self-possession throughout the year:

> This new environment is absolutely new to you and totally different cultural background, then I think it will really do good for you, for your social life, especially for your work. (WS, p. 59 May 2002)

These sentiments were echoed by YMX at the end of the project, during a period of reflection where she asserted that the primary value that she obtained from her study in the UK was the opportunity to live independently and to learn how to cope domestically. This was an experience which she felt would have been impossible if she had remained in China:

> It is quite different. Because if I study in China, if I don't have something, I can call my parents and ask them to deal with it for me. Now they can't tell me. If something happen, I must do it by myself. (YMX, p.41. May 2002)

Another participant, XJ, within the study group only until February 2002, took very practical advantage of his time in the UK by playing the financial markets during the Christmas vacation, with money advanced to him by his stockbroker father for this purpose. Not only did his experience illuminate the value of direct exposure to UK business but it also symbolized his general orientation to learning within a broad vocational context. Certainly, among other student accounts, this episode supported evidence about the existence of a strong practical and experiential orientation to learning that all the participants indicated in the initial survey in October.

Participant profiles: a summary

Taken as a whole, the group presented an interesting but not atypical profile of Chinese students coming to study in the UK. Their experiences and attitudes

resonated strongly with the profile set out in the literature review. Essentially middle class, the group were ambitious and had been guided by family - who were making the main financial investment in their child's education - into choices about courses of study. They were perhaps more interested in living overseas and developing English-language skills than in the course of study. For some at least, a period of study in the UK was followed by a search for opportunities to stay in Britain for longer, to consolidate and develop their initial year's international experience or simply to earn some money before returning home. This picture presented a group whose motivations to study were dispersed and varied - not simply focused on the programme of formal learning - and whose pragmatism in making this particular educational choice predisposed them to continuing to make similar pragmatic choices about their engagement with teaching and learning. One of the project's interesting questions, therefore, was to explore how far this underlying set of values and basic orientations towards formal learning was challenged or changed during the year - the fundamental implicit theory - or whether the changes were in more technical or practical domains, less challenging to participants' overall personal values and beliefs.

Teaching and learning: Broad themes

The interviews' central theme was teaching and learning, as the students underwent different experiences. The following themes emerged from the interviews in a variety of ways and are presented in generic patterns as they appeared in the interview sessions rather than being organized in any more formal classification or taxonomy. Essentially, there were two basic thematic clusters. The first focused on students' intellectual orientation to the learning process, while the second focused more on affective aspects, primarily driven by their discussion of relationships with others inside and outside the classroom.

Making sense of the learning context

On the surface, the students presented a very open perspective to the UK learning experience and were predisposed to adapt and change their style and behaviour during the year. Indeed, a representative view located responsibility for successful adaptation exclusively on the student:

> I am the kind of person who just likes to get used to the environment quickly, so I don't think I will have to change anything to be different. According to the different environment, I will change myself. (CD p 9)

Nonetheless, participants encountered a number of challenges during their study year. The first and most striking was the shock which they expressed about the volume and difficulty of the work involved in the degree programme:

> ...it is difficult for me to write some material to reference...First I must read many books so that I can find the material and understand. Then I can outline my notes. Because in China, we will finish two or three essay in one semester, but here there are many for us to finish. (HLG, p 10)

> I have to do my research independently by myself. I should look for many, many books, a lot of information, not everything you tell me. I have to do research by myself. (YB p3,)

> We have to do so much reading and so much research and also I don't think these coursework is valuable. (PT, p.13)

This work pressure was a clear contrast to the Chinese university environment they has previously experienced. As noted in the literature review, the pressure to obtain a university place is significant (Turner and Acker, 2002). Once on campus, however, pressures significantly reduce, supported by multiple opportunities to resit examinations and a relatively small assessment load, for example. The contrast with expectations of PG students in the UK, therefore, proved almost shocking to participants and required a hasty readjustment of expectations.

One of the biggest challenges students discussed concerned the pitch and level of the teaching and the independent learning process. Participants stressed the desirability of more basic conceptual work incorporated into their programmes of study before progressing to more advanced levels. They showed a conception of learning as knowledge, skills-based 'building blocks', and were anxious for lecturers to make their intellectual progress explicit:

> I want more specific, basic knowledge on Business or Economics. Because some parts of the lecture are concerned with building on that you already have a basic understanding of business or something. But according to me and according to some students from China, they are not majoring in Business or Economics [before they came here], so maybe we expected some basic concepts. (WS. p. 9)

Since they felt they didn't receive this kind of input, they felt that their learning progress was impeded. In addition, LG, in an early interview, discussed his difficulties in understanding the nature of independent learning, which became a key contributor to his decision to terminate his studies and return to China in January. First he contrasted study in the UK with study on his first degree programme, offered by the same university in Malaysia, but taught by Chinese Malaysian lecturers in the traditional Chinese style:

> ....The biggest difference is that...[In Malaysia], if you really understand what the lecturer is talking about in the class, you only have to spend a little time to read about the reference book. Because what the lecturer taught is enough for you, at least in the first degree level, that is enough. You just go back and review and do some practice, and do very little, very little, very limited reference book or other resources. My lecturer said that if you really understand what I am going to say in this two hour class, then you must pass. If you want to get A or B or something, you do some extra reading. So now [in the UK], the lecture is only one hour, very limited...I mean, I must do a lot of things like go to the LRC... [In Malaysia], the lecturer only really talks about one whole chapter. They go detail very detail and if you really understand it, then I can say it is no problem for this chapter and if you attend class regularly, I can say it is no problem for this class at all. (LG, p.7-8)

He then goes on to describe his experiences in the UK in more detail:

I think the difference is in the teaching style...here the lecturer only point something, the next thing you must do by yourself. The lecturer over there tell everything. You already know which part you should go in. [Here], they only give the guidance, the rest of the thing you must do by yourself. So you have to worry. If I go in the wrong direction, I totally lost. You learn a lot of things there, but it is no use... the

> communication between the classmates and the lecturers is not...the Chinese people don't know themselves...even if they know something about your idea, they don't want to speak up. Because they hide, they say maybe it is a pretend...they don't want to communicate. Maybe it is mainly the language problem. It is not frequently say in English or dare to say something wrong. 'Oh I will be wrong. Everyone will laugh at me.' So in every class, they just sit and learn, only what they really do is to discuss with other Chinese. (LG, p.8-9)

Taken together, these factors revealed some interesting implications. Pre-experience conversion Masters degrees tend to be designed with a fairly steep early learning-curve, so that students can effectively 'catch up' to first degree level and then progress to appropriate Master's-level work during the latter stages of the programme - the type of developmental approach to learning that participants suggested they desired. Nonetheless, this pattern also suggests that students should be highly motivated and independently able to access and understand foundation level concepts quickly and easily at the beginning of the programme. In other words, students coming onto such programmes should be immediately able to work inside UK academic conventions, practices and norms. Participants' comments throughout the interviews repeatedly highlighted the difficulties this assumption imposed upon them. Coming as they did from an education background which they reported was largely teacher-directed and conceptually unitarist, the students felt they not only had to adapt to different ethnic and pedagogical cultures very quickly but were 'expected' (by the lecturers and the demands of assessment) to make intellectual progress in the subject area rapidly, in order to cope with the ongoing demands of the work. In the light of this, perhaps it is unsurprising that participants expressed particular stresses at the end of the first term, when confronting their module assessments, and the marks they achieved:

> In fact, I am not satisfied with my score in semester A...Very bad, very bad! I know Marketing and technology is D, D1. I have never got...I have become a bad student here in Britain...I can't get an excellent or good score for my study. In China, I am not top three, but I'm top ten student. But here I'm a bad student... (HLG p.25)

These views also underlined the students' relatively poor levels of performance in early assessments compared to the general level to which they had been accustomed

in China and some were able to achieve in the UK later on. In the first semester, average student scores - as reported during the interviews - were in the C1-D3 range (D3 = a basic pass). In the second semester the range had broadened and lifted to C1-A3 (A3 = distinction level). A further interesting factor within this pattern was that participants sought explicit information from lecturers about their progress and techniques for success - the processes of external 'scaffolding' or facilitation required to progress in complex learning situations (Argyris 1972, Bruner 1996). Overall, this area of cultural pedagogical conventions and learning miscommunications, more than inherent conceptual difficulties presented by subjects of study, featured as the greatest anxiety in interview accounts. Moreover, participants' unease developed into ambivalence towards lecturers (explored below). It was also a focus for many revelations about the persistence of pre-existing attitudes towards learning. For example:

> HLG: I must read more books, and the teacher teach few, teach little, I think.
>
> I: and what does that mean?
>
> HLG: Just like self-teaching, a kind of self-teaching, I think...It's just a different way to learn because in China the teachers taught us more. (HLG, p.8)

> I think after we finish the study here, we can't learn more. We are just busy with our coursework each week, I think...Even though we don't take the lecture, maybe we read some books and we can finish the coursework...I think the courses, not the courses, but the course-works are nonsense... (HLG, p.16-17)

Another attitudinal aspect of participants' underlying learning approach ascribed a notional academic value to a Master's degree, differentiating it from earlier levels of study. Such an emphasis on a formal hierarchy of learning seemed consistent with expectations of ritualistic or class-based attitudes to education in the literature. Equally, an interesting contradiction emerged here. On the one hand, as noted above, some participants were specifically motivated to participate on a pre-experience Master's programme designed for those with no prior disciplinary experience, yet at the same time they were uneasy at the implications they felt this had for the degree's basic value. Unsurprisingly, such a response was more clearly pronounced in the attitudes of those who had previously studied Business and Management. It certainly

revealed strong preconceived unitarist notions about what a Master's degree was. To some extent, these responses may have originated in the broad recruitment criteria used for Master's like the one on which the participants found themselves. It also underlined their tendency not to contextualise their experiences, however, and the mismatch between their expectations of the learning environment, their own capabilities as learners and the reality of the curriculum, both in level and breadth.

As noted above, these perceptions were particularly pronounced among the majority in the group who had previously studied Business and Management. As a sub-group, they sought consolidated disciplinary connections and resonances within the subject as taught in China and Britain. This was not necessarily present, however, and caused additional confusion to their understanding of their progress:

> Although she [the lecturer] tried to explain it to me and she tried her best to explain it, but I still can't get anything. I still can't get any information. I don't think I can connect to the things that she said, connected with the knowledge that I learned before. (CD p13)

Such concerns also contributed to participants' anxiety about the value of the Master's degree. It was clear that at least some of them searched for conceptual or thematic progression from previous learning and were unprepared for the different theoretical conceptualizations of the subject. Such confusions were perhaps an inevitable consequence attendant on the change in context. They also underlined participants' unitarist epistemologies in respect of study discipline. In addition, they reflected the normative and unitarist intellectual framework which participants reported as characteristic of their studies in China. Nonetheless, such confusions inevitably affected participants' learning confidence. They also presented implications for participants' struggles to develop critical skills and engage with a pluralist epistemology. In many cases, it seemed easier for participants to simply ignore or reject differences as examples of cultural values rather than engage and consider them characteristics of the international intellectual dialectic.

Integrating different aspects of the learning process

In articulating their views about the overall learning process, participants expressed anxieties about a perceived absence of holistic integration within both module components and modules within programmes of study. For example, in some cases, they found it difficult to relate the substance of weekly readings with lecture coverage. For some, this underlined lack of experience in extensive and/ or critical reading. The net effect of such confusions was considerable uncertainty about the substance of learning and how elements 'fitted together'. They both reflected and contributed to an atomistic orientation to knowledge-acquisition, therefore.

In addition, students reported that where they felt unclear about a learning point or how to progress with a piece of work because of a lack of explicit structures or instructions, they would simply put it to one side and ignore it as long as possible:

> ...But sometimes, like for some courseworks I really didn't know what to do, and when I checked the information through the internet I am still not satisfied with the information, so I just delayed for several days. And still haven't started yet. Some courseworks are like that. (CD p20)

> If I don't like this subject, I just leave it out. I think, "OK, later, I will look at it later." (LG, p.16)

At times this represented participants' responses to uneasiness about approaching the lecturer to ask questions or for clarification. At other times, a lack of certainty diminished their general feelings of confidence. Either way, participants delayed starting of a piece of work, even though they believed that they needed more time to finish work satisfactorily than their peers.

Confidence

Leading on from the previous issue, the theme of personal confidence as a key contributor to participants' learning development recurred frequently, whether discussing English-language skills, subject-related skills or personally:

I think when you are talking to somebody, there are many topics. If you learn so many things, they will give you confidence. You will think I am better than this man. I know something, he doesn't know this. This feeling is good. (PT, p.6)

Most Chinese people are not very outgoing, not very active...if people speak English. their speaking is not very good ...On one hand they are shy. On the other, their English speaking is not good and they will feel like not happy enough, not enough self-confident.(CD, p.4)

As discussed above, participants expressed the need for explicit learning support and feedback from lecturers in order to feel confident and able to progress:

> If at that time the lecturer will say very supportive words like, "Oh your argument is quite interesting, go on, go on," and what else, and "what a good contribution you do," and something like that, then the student will feel, "Oh, yes, the lecturer really care about me and like the classmates also debate with me," that is good for Chinese students. The lecturer and other people indirectly encourage him to say his idea out. (LG p10.)

This reliance on extrinsic sources of support to instill confidence was quite striking. It illustrated students' tenuous hold on internal resources for their learning development. During discussions about their previous education, many noted that they felt the Chinese teaching and learning environment was designed to provide explicit sources of external feedback and support from teachers, together with informal testing and frequent formal assessments. Collectively, these factors enabled them to clearly perceive and understand their progress. In the UK, this framework for progression and feedback was not apparent:

I think self-reading and self-learning is the most important thing [I have learned]...I realize I cannot only depend on the lecturer and during the lecture period say...I used to depend on this and just read a little bit. It is very good. But now totally changed... The lecturer is helping you, guiding you, not feeding you or something. The whole picture is changed. (LG, p.18)

In the UK, participants felt that comparatively little formative assessment existed and an absence of informal assessment to give them direction. UK lecturers gave little guidance and few other support networks existed. Participants redounded on tried and tested methods, therefore, attempting to read more and study for longer hours to fill in the vacuum, without having a clear view of the purpose of these activities. They also talked informally with friends to attempt to understand their context better. Given that the majority of their friends were other Chinese students, however, they were relatively unable to resolve the issues they confronted. Consequently confidence tended to drop, confusion took hold and, by January, participants had by and large begun to adopt either instrumental learning orientations or emotionally disengaged from their studies.

They reported a number of consequences of this process. First, a lack of confidence made them feel less able to participate in class, especially in group situations. Secondly, their reticence to participate hampered their English-language development, thus building something of a spiral of declining confidence. In some respects, I was able to mitigate this process through my contact with participants, providing them an external source of information and support from which to contextualise their experiences. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the specific number of explanations I provided about the UK system, grading, the nature of assessment etc increased after January - when the first assessments had taken place. However, it was also around that time that some participants opted not to continue with the project. Perhaps the confidence issue had something to do with that, thought this is untested.

Language

One universal participants expressed was a correlation between language ability and development and confidence in study and their personal lives within their sense of overall progress:

> I'd like to talk to an English man...Some Chinese they don't have that kind of courage to talk with English man or foreigner because they do not think their English is good enough to continue with their discussion. So this is my priority or something like that...Mostly...my English is better and I have a good vocabulary in order to sustain the conversation. (WS, p.11-12)

I have learned English since I was 10 or 11 but I am still not good at English. My English is not good. (QWY, p.31. May 2002)

The people is very kind, I think. Most of the people is helpful. Because sometimes I think my English is no good, so sometimes I talk to them and [say] pardon, pardon. They are very patient. (YMX, p.5)

Confidence in English, participants felt, had a clear impact on their study progress and fundamentally on the development of relationships. As explored below, most participants, for example, maintained mainly Chinese student friends, driven by a reluctance to be embarrassed by language skills which they felt were too poor to enjoy casual social conversation with others. This sense of unease with language affected all the participants irrespective of their actual communicative ability - demonstrated by the quality of conversation in the interviews. To a large extent, such a high concern about language skills and the consequent reluctance to speak with others influenced both their perspectives about group activities and the general sense of competitiveness in the teaching and learning setting. Ideas about the need to protect face are well documented in the literature about Chinese society (Allinson, 1989; Bond, 1991; Wenshan, 2003). Participants' lack of confidence in their command of English made a striking example, however, of how the desire to avoid embarrassment in front of others had the potential to undermine learning and cut off social opportunities. Equally, participants were aware of the consequences of their behaviour and were frustrated by them. They also showed a strong awareness of the academic implications that a focus on language over content had on their performance:

> Here the lecturer is focusing on the idea, not the grammar or something else like some little things. But in our country, we learn English just as a foreign language, so when we learn the writing we just focus on the grammar or the vocabulary, something like that. So when I feel like I finish this essay quite successfully, maybe my idea is not good and I didn't support my topic enough, use enough material to support, so I didn't get the high mark. (CD p21-2)

Participants regarded language skills perhaps more than any other as a key access point from which to negotiate the cultural aspects of learning in Britain. It was also the medium through which they could reflect on, contextualise their learning experiences and in which they could ask questions and probe the cultural meanings of phenomena they encountered. They clearly recognized the value of well-developed language skills in negotiating their studies. Equally, they felt that their day-to-day situation - with few UK friends or classmates, little contact with lecturers, little opportunity to meet local people - mitigated against the development of better language skills. Frustration with language ability, therefore, showed itself as a key determinant in the development of confidence in learning through the year.

Conclusion

Taken together this range of factors, based on participants' ability to reflect on learning experiences holistically, set a framework for the development of other narrative aspects within their accounts. From the beginning, participants began to contextualise and attempt to objectify their learning experiences as something outside of themselves (and even distance themselves emotionally), almost regarding them as an exploration in cultural studies or the anthropology of learning. Such responses stemmed to some extent from previous intellectual training and preconceptions about learning in Britain and its contrasts to China. To some extent they also derived from participants' focus on the importance of the 'overseas' aspects of their studies. For example, participants only ever discussed British people or their classmates as 'foreigners', emphasizing their own sense of 'otherness' in the UK context. Nonetheless they represented a response to the sheer scale of the cultural recontextualization participants felt they had to undertake to successfully penetrate the academic conventions and practices that shaped their day-to-day learning lives. Intellectually, the scale of challenges in both propositional and procedural learning environments were significant. Attempting to integrate and make sense of the disparate aspects of this new learning world independently and with little recourse to indigenous UK intellectual supports to scaffold access, made the scale of the problem even greater. As a result, participants devoted considerable interview time to discussing the confusions, miscommunications and misunderstandings which they felt governed their learning experiences. They also focused on their relationships with others as an indirect way of exploring the affective aspects of their responses to

the context and their difficulties in understanding the environment. These discussions form the second cluster of themes.

Emotional responses to relationships in the learning context

Participants expectations of themselves as learners

Developing an assessment of the emotional aspects of their responses to the UK year, it seems sensible to begin with discussion about participants' emotional responses to their own behaviour. As a group, they seemed to put themselves under a lot of pressure over the year, exhibiting high expectations of their performance. Partly this was shown in responses to grades:

> When I studied bridging programme I tried to get A, but now I will just try to get B...Of course, I want to get A, but the fact shows I didn't...I changed my standard, just I face the fact, but after the practice of semester A, in semester B, I think some aspects I can improve them,. So my standard is still A. (YB, p.18)

Overall participants responses to marks demonstrated that they thought they had not worked hard or long enough at assignments. In part, this was also a response to family pressures:

> You know before Christmas, I waste some of the time, but after Christmas I manage the time very efficiently. Every minute is very important, so that is a change...I spend more time to study, to research and I spend most the time, I mean cooking, cooking at home - I will ask my friends to cooking instead of me. I just eat and wash no bowl. (XJ, p.22)

> ...I got a not very good mark, just a C or a C3...I never get a C3!...One thing is for me and the other is for my parents also. When I tell them I got C, Oh terrible! 'don't do that again!'...'you must get B or A'. (XJ, p.13-14)

YB for example, even reported that she lied to her family about her performance:

> Sometimes I lied to them. They ask me, "how about your study? Did you watch the news on TV and in the newspaper? Did you know a lot of news about the UK, about

British life and British people?" And I say, "yes, yes, don't worry about this." But sometimes I didn't do this. I spend time playing...Some marks they don't know. If I get C I won't tell them. At first I mean. Maybe I will think it over for some days and then tell them. They won't be happy with C. B is okay. They don't want me only to get A and B. They think that is useless, my father think. They think just what I have said. They think that when I got an interview, the interviewer can say, 'this girl is very, very good, excellent.' (YB p21)

Equally, those who performed well academically were able to maintain self-confidence:

> I want to say that at the beginning, in semester A, at that time I worry about my study a lot. Because in China I always got good grade for the coursework but for the first one here was only a C, so I really worry about it. I think maybe it is my language or something else. But after the second or following coursework, I get A or B and this gives me confidence. I think, 'oh, my study method is good,' so this gives me confidence. Confidence for study I think is very important." (PT, p.38)

In spite of this correlation between confidence and academic success, however, at the end of the year participants attributed primary value to their domestic independence and international exposure. This presented a surface contradiction with their behaviour during the year, which was strongly oriented to study. Participants reported spending very little time, even during vacations, on travel or leisure-activities - hardly exploring the UK or Europe. This may have further limited their exposure to the UK's cultural context and contributed to difficulties in reconciling contradictions in attitudes to study and lifestyle.

Lecturers and students

Unsurprisingly, as indicated above, discussions about lecturers figured regularly in interview discussions and were a touch-paper for the emotional aspects of participants' reflections. Taken as a whole, participants were very disappointed with their lecturers and lectures. These views were compounded as the year progressed. Such dissatisfactions highlighted a number of important factors in participants' implicit theories of learning and the degree to which they evolved during their year of study.

First, reinforcing the initial survey evidence, participants stressed the importance of developing close personal relationships with lecturers, outside the formality of the classroom. This desire certainly resonated with the literature and participants' previous experiences in China:

> ...[The students] should communicate with the lecturer, so the lecturer think that he or she is very important to them, so the feeling is good. (PT, p5)

Its frustration was palpable in the student accounts. For example, WS, formerly an English teacher in a Chinese university, contrasted his view of effective pedagogy with the UK style of classroom interaction:

> I think that is the tutor's responsibility to raise [students'] interest, to raise their expectation, so that they can speak more, not only the tutor to say something. And also in the seminar, the seminar is maybe group discussions and you have to answer something according to the teacher, but here in seminar, the tutor gives you several questions and then the tutor will appoint somebody to answer your question, I think it is not good. Because if students are really interested in the topic, they will answer the question by themselves. There is no need for the tutor to ask them to participate, they will participate by themselves. I think maybe the tutor must adapt some kind of strategy to improve the environment of the classroom .... When I was a teacher in the university, my classroom is a very active one. (WS, p.39)

In another example, LG expressed dislike of the office-hours system, used to indicate times when lecturers were freely available to talk to students. Interestingly the university had introduced the system to improve student support:

> Communicating with the lecturer is a very problem also...You know, here [in the UK], it is (knocks on table), "sir, miss, can I come in?" (Raises his voice) "Yes, come in please, yes." The lecturer is something like hiding in a very small, closed room. The lecturer puts on the paper, 'I will only see students on a Monday, only for one short slot of time.' Only I can see the lecturer on a Monday at this time. Oh, it is not quite easy, I think. But I can't just knock on the door and say, "Miss, I have something to show you, " something like that...That is, maybe like this, "from

> Wednesday to Friday, don't see me at all, please." Something like this. The students so scared. If I really got some problem on Friday, I have to wait until next Monday and maybe it is nothing." (LG p 9-10)

Overall, participants focused much of their sense of personal and social isolation on relationships with lecturers. They suggested that lecturers set the social tone of the School community and thought that their personal distance students indicated a broadly uncaring institutional attitude.

Developing the points raised above, participants also expressed concern about the open and relatively unstructured organization of lectures, in which lecturers did not give clear signposts about the teaching session. This inhibited participants' ability to integrate elements of the study process and to see the relevance of lectures:

> I think guidelines quite important...and some subjects, the content they taught during the lectures are quite useful and contributes to the coursework, but a few of them...I got the feeling if I don't attend their lecture, I can still do the coursework. I just need to search some information and ask my classmates and have finished that, so I don't know if the lecture is useful or not. (CD, p.27)

A desire for structured and guided access into learning was a clear benchmark for all participants in estimating the quality of the lecturer teaching them:

> One of the subjects is quite hard for me...It is a lot of extra reading to do and some of it is very professional, it is written by some expert in some specific writing, or something like that, and it is quite hard to read and understand...In the lecture, I think it is only a very, very brief idea that is all. Maybe it is a big class and only one hour lecture...I spent two days or three days read the article and I got little, even nothing. I am so worried about that subject...the reading list is quite long, you see...So during the seminar class, only a few student attend. So I asked someone, "why don't you attend the seminar? It is quite interesting class." And she said, "I didn't finish reading the essential reading, so it is no point to attend." The last class, I think only four or five student attend the seminar. (LG, p.13)

Participants also correlated teaching with individual lecturers' public celebrity:

> If the lecturer is very famous, I think I can learn more, a lot of knowledge, not only knowledge, but maybe the experience. Yeah, if I can, I think maybe I want it to be like this. (PT, p.41)

For this group, a clear notional link existed between academic research credibility and classroom competence. In addition, as indicated in the initial questionnaires, Chinese students placed a high level of responsibility for student success on the lecturers. For one participant, this opinion was stark:

> In Chinese [there is] a saying. "There is no bad student, just a bad teacher."...Because every student, every people, they can learn. Why they didn't learn well, maybe is the method of the teacher...the teacher has some problems. They cannot teach the student well. (YMX, p.7)

These factors together demonstrated students' high expectations of academics in the university. For them, the model lecturer should not only be a friend, competent in the classroom and provide structured and guided access to learning for students but also be celebrated as a researcher.

As well as illuminating participants' expectations about UK academics, this composite picture highlighted aspects of their underlying conceptualizations of the learning experience. For example, the majority noted that they had previously enjoyed close and amicable relationships with lecturers in China, who were available whenever students needed them. They also described the structured way in which lecturers guided and directed students' learning. Nonetheless, their expectations of lecturer's research celebrity seemed somewhat at odds with this picture of their previous experience. Given the absence of research cultures in Chinese teaching institutions and the separation of research academics from the mainstream university community into research institutes, this view seemed to emerge from preconceptions about UK academic culture. To some extent, the perspective flowed from the strong consumer perspective participants brought to their studies (as a response to UK HE's marketing strategies?). It certainly reflected their ambition to get the best intellectual and financial value out of their studies. In terms of development of implicit theories of

education, this perception also hinted that participants were aggregating or 'bolting-on' composite beliefs into their pre-existing conceptions, rather than modifying their ideas in the light of new experience. Equally, at their simplest, these statements reinforced the normative view that emerged from cultural patternings of academic relationships in China and highlighted participants' struggles to make sense, often alone, of their new context. It is also possible that participants were exposed to 'bad' teaching, whatever benchmark applied. For a number of reasons. teaching observations did not form part of the study - apart from reflections in my own seminar room - so this assumption was untested.

One interesting aspect of these struggles remained participants' tendency to reject the unfamiliar or regard it in a negative light based on their previous experience or preconceptions: a struggle to retain the certainties of a pre-existing frame of reference. They also often appeared reluctant to accept a culturally-contingent rationale for differences but asserted the unitarist position that their preferences and beliefs were right:

> HLG: In China, I think in China to evaluate the students is their score, the exam score.
>
> I: Do you believe that? Do you think that makes a good student or a bad student?
>
> HLG: If a person don't know you, how can he judge you a good student or a bad student? The only way is through your exam score... (HLG P25)

To some extent, this was unsurprising, given participants' exposure to an essentially unitarist epistemological and pedagogical context in their previous educational lives. Nonetheless, the extent to which this perspective could hinder participants from shifting their perspective to incorporate the new context remained clear. In some respects, therefore, this view identified and explained an expectations gap, as participants developed ever-greater hopes of the teaching and learning deliverables. At the least, this tendency to develop a culturally-composite model of the role of lecturers highlighted individuals' emotional and intellectual struggles as they attempted to accommodate new experience into their pre-existing ideas.

Cohort dynamics

Within an assessment of peer relationships, a recurring discussion theme was peer comparisons. Participants discussed classmates partly as a means of externalizing and illustrating particular points and partly of evaluating their own position and the university's assessment system. This tendency was rooted in their previous educational experiences, in which competitively-valued cohort norms were the only criteria for assessment and determining progression. For example, in discussing perceived grading subjectivity, WS described how students compared marks, in spite of the formal university systems mitigating against such comparisons:

> WS: Two markers, they separate all the students into two parts and one marks range is from A1 to B3, never bad than B3, but the other marker, the highest mark is C1, so I think it is not fair.
> I: How did you find out everybody's marks?
> WS: Because I saw several people's marks and the marks name is different, but people who got the highest marks or good marks are from that person and people like me who got C or D or even several people failed from Thailand and they have the same person as me marking... (WS, p.55)

This attempt to compare position as a means of finding academic self-identity and increase classroom confidence persisted throughout the year. It seemed a fairly clear indicator of difficulties participants experienced in shifting their expectations of the teaching and learning environment or adapting at anything other than a fairly superficial level. Certainly it seemed clear that comparing results and individual performance, as measured in formal assessments, figured frequently in their peer conversations:

> I: So you way you got a couple of marks back and you feel happy with them, do you?
> YB: Yeah, not very good but among Asian students not bad. (YB p12)

> I know it is really difficult for me to get a B mark. When I saw those Indian guys, they just started their coursework in there last few days and they still can get a high mark. So I think maybe just like they are quite good at writing in their country. They just practice a lot. Or they use English as their first language. So it's not a surprise. (CD p24)

Even where assessment did not formally enter into an exercise or activity, students attempted to competitively benchmark themselves:

> Chinese people will listen first, then I think your opinion is quite opposite to me, so at that point I will say what I prepared or something. I will say something if I feel I can defeat you and I can really say something that I fully prepared and got confidence to say it. So people won't laugh at me and so [I can be] proud of it. (LG, p.10)

Groupwork

Following on from discussions of peer relationships and competition within participants' accounts, one of the most powerful interview themes focused on attitudes towards small group working. For all participants, working in formal learning groups was new. Although some were predisposed to like group-work, as the year progressed these attitudes hardened into a universal dislike of group activities, particularly if they were assessed. The reasons for these responses were many, but built on basic constructs of the purpose and operational dynamics of groups:

> I like to work in groups…In my group most of the people are talkative; they want to talk more…For the group session I try to achieve my group spirit and just work together and cooperate…(XJ, p.9 November 2001)

> Groups, I think is not efficient (XJ, p.17 December 2001)

> I think [groupwork] is fine…I think I am enjoying it...I think it is not the same as before. Before I thought I spoke less than other group members, but now I am enjoying it!…Yes, and I can do something!…Before a group meeting, I have done some preparation. I know the context of the meeting, so I can say something. (QWY, p. 11. Beginning of December 2001)

> I don't know why lecturers always set a group work. I don't like group work! (QWY, p.21. End of January 2002)

> During the lecture some teacher let us be a group and discuss together, so sometimes you will feel, 'oh, this students his thought is very good, he know a lot, so I should

> learn something from him.' I realized you have to learn something from other people. You can't spend like only yourself, no fresh air, no fresh thoughts. (YB p13)
>
> Group work? Maybe I not get used to this, so I don't really like group work, but I know it is a good way to improve myself or learn something... (YB p18-19)

At times, participants seemed unwilling to relinquish personal objectives for group purposes or to subsume their own preferences into group dynamics. Equally, when focused on group performance, they showed little tolerance of anything less than full commitment from other group members and were unhappy that different people were differently-motivated to the group:

> During those days, it is really a nightmare. It is really a nightmare to me! Because we have to hand it in tomorrow but it seems that our group did nothing, so it is very difficult. I think maybe we can finish it that night, but why we didn't do it earlier than that! Not at the last minute. I think different people have different ideas.....You know according to my eyes [my group members] always work their dissertation or essay at the last minute. I think it is a university, not a middle school or a high school! .....I have to take care if they will take care or not. (WS, p.33-4)

Nonetheless, participants were willing to undertake a disproportionate share of the group task where other group members were not willing:

> If I have time, I just do parts some parts of group work, even if the part is not mine, I will do it and give the material to them and maybe she will or he will organize it to make his part or her part...It is not equal ability for each one in a group. (XJ p28)
>
> If there is nobody who will do it, then I have to do it because I am in the group. I am a member of the group. I think there is no need to complain. (WS, p.35)

This support of the group was not motivated by team loyalty, however, but regarded as necessary to avoid personal suffering (with bad marks, or a weak power position, for example). The motivation for hard work in this case remained, therefore, individualistic rather than collective in its orientation.

In a general sense, participants did not identify groups as characterized by collective problem-solving power but as competitive environments to which individuals brought their own personal skills and utilized group effort to maximise achievement of disparate individual objectives:

> I don't know why, but if you put a Chinese and ask him or her to work individually, he or her will do a perfect job. However, if you ask three or four of them to work in a group, they will try to do the things themselves, the things that belong to theirselves perfect instead of the group one...In China, the environment is totally different than here. If we have to work together in a group, there is strong competition...There is not a very strong competition here compared to China. (WS, p.18)

Group interpersonal dynamics were competitive, therefore, and passively confrontational. Participants did not view groups as places to exhibit ignorance or collectively explore issues but as places to pool knowledge-resources in a common task:

> If you have more idea about this, then you are talking about it more. If you have no idea about this, you should listen more to other people telling you about this. It is depending on the knowledge related to the topic. (PT, p.11)
>
> When a person talks about it, it means that he or she knows things, knows something about this topic. (XJ, p.17)

This basic conception of groups meant that participants found it difficult to work together and provide or find mutual support in student groups. They were also highly sensitive to differences in interpersonal communication dynamics between group members. Participants discussed their relatively low levels of vocalization compared to other group members, sometimes occasioned by fear of exposure of poor language skills, sometimes because of a feeling that they had little concrete knowledge to offer the group:

> I think I am the person who cooperates with other people, with the members. I just like, sometimes, I just do the assignment that they ask me to do. Sometimes if they get the better idea, then I will follow them I don't mind it actually. (CD p14)

At other times, this shyness resulted from unease with the lack of formal role or task allocation, sometimes from simple politeness. Whatever the root cause, participants reflectively explored their ideas about group dynamics extensively during the interviews, while feeling less able to modify their behaviour or attempt different interpersonal strategies.

In addition, within the Chinese student community itself, a self-reinforcing pattern of cohort relationships emerged, asserting Chinese cultural group-dynamics rather than reflecting the current context. For example, when students discussed or solicited classmates help with study, this contact reinforced a perceived hierarchy of student knowing and capability, rather than collaboratively generating group-based ideas. In addition, perceptible ethnic tensions crept into group dynamics from time to time, sometimes unhelpfully:

> And as I said, some of them, my group members they did not are not clever or good enough, but they just think they are better than us. We like separate uhm...the Chinese group and the European country group, but actually we are in the same group, but it is like separate groups. So the lecturer always get the good impression about the European group members. Oh, I don't know. I got not such a good feeling. (CD, p.30)

This sense of being 'stuck' in the context of group-working richly illustrated the complexity of challenges to participants' implicit theories. On the one hand, their new experiences demonstrated that alternative strategies and behaviours might be valid in the prevailing environment. On the other, participants' previous educational training oriented them to take a negatively-critical view of the dynamics in the new context and discount the development of new approaches. Those who were able to successfully negotiate small-group-working adopted a strictly pragmatic approach, intellectually and emotionally separating their current strategies from their preferred behaviours and without changing their underlying emotional or intellectual values. Most ended the year expressing a simple and visceral dislike of group-work, however, especially independent peer-groups:

I don't like groupwork...I don't think it is useful. (HLG p28)

In spite of the significant reservations expressed about group work, however, by the end of the year most participants also felt that group-working provided important experiences in the context of their UK studies, though they questioned its relevance in the Chinese context, where the cultural collective-dynamics were, they believed, so different.

Overall, attitudes to group work highlighted the differential between process and style in theories of learning. Participants' dominant conceptual model of group-work was as a process of pooling knowledge and information for the benefit of individual members rather than as generating ideas about or novel solutions for issues. Essentially group members remained independent individuals who might deposit the fruits of their personal labours with the group to benefit others but who were unlikely receive reciprocal benefits. Groups operated as almost a charitable-giving environments, therefore, where knowledge was donated by some to others. Such views certainly resonated with literature about the operational dynamics of the Chinese social collective (Chen, 2002). As a result of these views, participants tended to dislike group work, especially those who were doing well and saw it as a squandering of their own resources rather than something bringing universal benefits. For them, group-work was a cultural process, involving stylistic conventions, not fundamental to the learning process. Even where participants intellectually understood the rationale for group-work, they found it difficult to internalize peer-group processes and remained competitive and individualistic in their reported behaviour.

Social life

Linking into wider resonances between relationships and study, one aspect of the living and learning experience participants reported as most disappointing was a lack of opportunity to meet British people, both within and outside the university. For example, WS (a communist party member in China) joined a local Mormon church to gain social contact:

> Somebody told me you are half a local student, as a matter of fact! Because I joined a church here. It is a church called the Church of Jesus Christ or Latter Day Saints. It's a Christianity from the United States of America...Yeah,. Mormon. The book of Mormon. I joined not only because I am interested in the culture of the Christianity, but also I like to participate with more local people, to understand their thinking of life and especially their thinking of the Christianity. (WS, p.29)

Among the student body overall, however, participants friendships were made among the Chinese student community - not always from choice:

> At first some foreign students don't like to speak to Chinese and if [you are] a Chinese student who cannot speak fluent English, few people like to chat with you. I think in the UK elders like to chat with the foreigner, but the young man, the young person, don't like to chat with the foreigner from Asia, I think... (HLG p27)

> QWY: Most of [my friends] are Chinese people or ...yeah Chinese people...Because I feel it is not easy to communicate with home students or other students.
> I: Why is that? Why do you think it is difficult?
> QWY: Sometimes I feel they do not want to talk with us. (QWY, p. 28)

> To be honest, not all the home students are so nice to the people, to the international students. (CD, p.4)

In spite of struggles to find UK friends, participants did not seem to value personal friendships and the social aspects of life very highly during the first part of the year. Over time, however, homesickness and isolation from the wider community began to have an effect and they talked more about friendships and the difficulties of getting to know people. Inevitably, this factor also had an impact on language development and personal confidence. For many students, basic lifestyle differences (e.g. around the role of alcohol in socializing) between themselves and the UK student population made making friendships difficult.

Conclusion

The student accounts presented a complex and contradictory set of emotional responses to their studies in the UK. At one and the same time they were excited to

encounter a new culture and fearful of rejection by it. In response to the social isolation they encountered, participants redounded more and more on relationship networks that were familiar and relatively unthreatening. Their ambivalence about groupworking and somewhat competitive approach to learning perhaps compounded these difficulties. They clearly felt that both the institution and lecturers should take more direct responsibility for providing social access for them and enabling them to develop relationships within the educational community. Ultimately, participants' accounts showed them to be rather lonely and isolated in the university with the consequence of limiting their emotional engagement with the complexities of the learning process or venturing into deep, transformational learning. For most, their primary emotional and personal objective - meeting British people and getting to know more about the country through British friends - remained, they felt, unmet. This had profound implications for their engagement with their studies. For some, study alone was uninteresting, not enriching their lives; for others, lack of access to native English-speakers hampered their language development. Overall, therefore, the poverty of participants' emotional lives detracted significantly from their engagement with study and compounded their intellectual confusion and unease.

Teaching and Learning: routine strategies

Developing consideration of the change and development of implicit theories through the year, it is interesting to explore participants' experiences at a number of levels. In the section above, the focus - driven by an assessment of the attitudes that they brought to relationships with lecturers and how they evaluated the personal interface with the learning experience - was on the intellectual and emotional aspects of learning. Another aspect that figured largely in participants' accounts, however, concerned practical and technical learning skills.

Exploration of learning techniques provided a very tangible dimension within participants' broad implicit models of learning. It was also important since, among others, Claxton's (1996) delineation of implicit theories of learning implies that the evolution of emotional or cognitive frameworks used to organize and make sense of learning is driven by discovery-learning - encounters with new experiences, of an essentially tangible nature. Participants' struggles to make sense of the conflicts

between their experiences, lived in the present, and their understanding, drawing from the past, seemed, therefore, consistent with the developmental vision inherent in this perspective. From the preceding discussion it seemed that some of the students' basic attitudes towards and broad organizing concepts about lecturers and learning, for example, did not change much through the year. It is helpful, therefore, to develop this exploration through an assessment of how their practical learning behaviours developed - and to some extent how they made sense of the new behaviours they were required to adopt. A number of themes emerged in this area.

Patterns of working

While particular pre-existing attitudes and feelings of language confidence may have influenced how participants engaged with learning, many of the interview conversations focused on the more tangible - and therefore easier to discuss - aspects of the learning process: how they operationalized their studies from day-to-day. In these discussions, a rich picture of the range and level of changes in practice, if not belief, that participants underwent began to emerge. Plotting out more detailed aspects of when and how the students studied, as individuals and in the group, therefore, threw up some particular insights.

Time given to study

Consistent with broad classifications of Chinese students, participants conformed to the 'virtuous' rather than 'effective' student characterization, spending long hours studying (Cottrell, 2003). Their equation between success and hard work remained clear throughout the year. For example:

> To be honest, I think it is really hard work! I don't think everyone enjoys studying. They just do things they have to, they just study because they have to. (CD p24)

> Fun! I haven't find it fun in my study!...the worst part is I must finish the essay in one week and stay up all night. (HLG p26)

As a result of such basic beliefs, most participants studied for long stretches, sometimes all day. Six students worked both at weekends and during the week and three studied mostly during the week between lectures and in the evenings. It was

clear, however, that participants maintained their early focus on hard work and long hours as a major contributor to success. Partly they regarded this as inevitable, given that their reading speed, they felt, was slower than for a native English speaker. Partly, however, this stemmed directly from their underlying construct of a 'good' student. These values did not seem to evolve during the year. Indeed, on one or two occasions, participants expressed disapproval of their UK peers, who they perceived as less study-oriented, less serious and therefore less 'good' students:

> The problem with British students is that they drink a very lot...Maybe they will think you are not open, you don't know what their life is like, you should join them. (PT, p.9)

Certainly, participants clearly indicated that they spent longer at their studies than most peers and regarded long hours as appropriate student behaviour. Unsurprisingly, at least in part, this correlation between learning and the labour process stemmed from their active sense of the different constructions of knowledge and learning in China and the UK. In China, participants felt, the process of study focused on reading and comprehension. In the UK it was more focused on writing:

> It is a little bit different from the Chinese point of view and an English point of view. You know a Chinese, even though you study a lot, maybe you couldn't improve but you have to keep on going because maybe a long time later you could get the result, get the achievement by your attention of this course, your diligence of this course. But according to the British education system, I think you have to know how to write the essay at first, and how to write in a formal system. (WS, p.37)

The students also castigated themselves strongly if they felt they had not been studying hard enough and showed a keen sense of self-discipline in their approach to work.

> Maybe I should made a plan before I do the coursework. Now I feel the time is limited...Always I waste the first week of my holiday - during that days I did not study so now I feel there is not enough time. (QWY, p.19)

Working in the library

In developing study routines, participants reported formalized routines attached to location. Most predominantly used the library during independent study and spent long hours there. In part, this was habit - teachers in China had previously required most participants to study in the library or in empty classrooms during the evenings. This tendency also responded to a desire to minimize domestic distractions, however, and linked to email and internet access, which most did not have at home. In a general sense, participants were impressed with UH's material facilities and this influenced their choice of study venue.

Generally, once set, a basic pattern of working remained constant through the year. To a large extent, therefore, participants weekly work pattern was determined by their preferred working environment. Those who studied mainly in the library worked when it was open. Those who preferred to study at home, worked whenever they were there - in the evening and at weekends.

Study and Assessment

In delineating the detail of their work practices, participants talked a great deal about how they prepared and wrote assignments. Not only was this the focus for the main burden of assessment, but also presented some of the greatest academic challenges and contrasted with the assessment diet to which they had been previously accustomed.

Participants gave most preparatory energy to general reading and developing conceptual understanding in advance of writing. Interestingly, in terms of the study process, they spent relatively little time on writing itself, usually making only one substantive draft of a piece of work before handing it in:

> I do not think that if you want to write an essay that it will take a long time to write. The most important thing is to prepare to write it.....I try to write a whole essay during one day or during a specific duration so that I can continue my idea... (WS, p.15-16)

In general terms, the overall amount of time given to assessment preparation was relatively short:

> According to the coursework, I mean if I have an idea about the coursework here, I could finish it in four hours maybe. (WS, p.31)

> You know, in the finance assignment, I really put, I spent ten hours to research the title and put around five hours or six hours to think about how to write and then spent four or five hours to finish. So I took two days, whole days, to finish one assignment. (XJ, p.21)

In addition, the main focus of editing or revision was on English language corrections rather than developing content or improving the narrative style of the work:

> After I write a whole essay, I will check it, maybe one day or two days later, not instantly. [I will rewrite] only small parts...mainly I focus on what sort of language should be used in the essay instead of in a normal article or something. (WS, p.16)

> I just look through it and think, 'oh, here,' and maybe I can find something wrong and some mistakes, maybe some spelling or some grammar. (XJ, p.23)

In discussing approaches to written assignments, participants regarded the expository or explanatory essay as the most useful academic-writing model, rather than the dialectical or discursive approach regarded as effective in the UK. Unsurprisingly, therefore, participants' understanding of citation was relatively undeveloped. Nonetheless, they recognized the limitations of their approach and saw that it inhibited their ability to develop critical and argumentative skills. Feeling unable to bridge the skills gap, however, reported approaches to writing retained a relatively unitarist expository framework - something that individuals commented on a number of times:

> In the first essay, I use maybe 90% of the essay, I use my own words, I didn't quote anything. I just read something and then...most of them are my own thinking. I think, I'm not sure, maybe there is a kind of cliché, you have to write, but I think you have to quote some work from the famous author or very

famous person in this field in order to strengthen your idea. Because your own idea is worthless compared to theirs because you know nothing about business, nothing compared to them, so you have to quote something. I think that is the most important things, so I think I improved that part maybe... Actually, I like to write article that use my own point of view. I do not like to use other people's point of view instead...But I think most people believe that you have to quote some people from the gurus or there very famous people in this field - you have to quote them. But I think...the people who want to know what you studied, what you learned from your work, they have to see your own idea, not what you quoted from another work. (WS, p.26)

As noted above, the main focus of assignment preparation was on general pre-reading which participants regarded as sufficient to lead directly to the execution of an assignment. This went some way to explaining their expectations of a high correlation between module reading lists and assignment questions. Such expectations resonated strongly with the passive-obedient student profile introduced in the literature review. This aspect of participants' approach to learning did not seem to develop much over the year, in spite of their acknowledgement of the UK's independent-learning culture. In addition, their approach to assignment preparation was influenced by long lead-in times between the issue of the assessment questions and the hand-in date:

> And even though I have assignment, coursework, but the time it not very tight. It will give use two or three weeks to prepare...But in China, time is tight, I think. Maybe one day or two days and you have to finish. (YB p4)

> It is different in China...When we learn something, maybe during this time we learned something specific in the lecture, maybe a teacher will assign the coursework, not at the beginning of the semester...[here] I think we haven't learned, we haven't had the lecture, so we should wait for the lecture relative to the coursework. (HLG, p.17)

Accustomed to very focused task-organization and short deadlines, adjusting to the self-organizing pattern of work that characterized the UK environment was something to which many participants found it difficult to adjust.

Work organization: sources of information

Another specific skills-challenge that featured in student accounts was work organization, especially the encoding of notes related to readings. Uncertainty began with a general inability to differentiate between sources of academic information:

> To be honest, very little using journal [in my assignments]. Journal, I think, I don't know. I don't know how to find a very academic journal using internet. I think I just know business.com or academic.com, this the academic website, so I found new or articles from there. I don't know exactly what an academic journal is. (XJ, p.24 January 2002)

Partly as a response to confusion about using literature and note-taking, therefore, participants used the internet as the prime initial information source for assignment preparation. They particularly liked the ease of access, especially since they were often online communicating with home:

> I spend about two hours on internet everyday, and I read more...Using internet everyday I check my mailbox and find some news about China and find material for my coursework. (HLG p13)

> I don't focus on the textbook too much. I use the computer more than the textbook. But before [in China], I get more information from textbook than computer.(YB p13)

Participants reported that obtaining information from the Internet was easier than searching through academic print media. In addition, they noted that language in web sources and student textbooks was clearer and more specific than the language in academic journals:

> The English in journals is more difficult than in books. (HLG, p.19)

Nonetheless, some participants also discussed the limitations of web information for academic work:

> ...If you browse through internet, you can get a brief picture of the whole article instantly. The disadvantage is most of the detail is not correct and some are outdated but they are still put them in the internet, so I think it is a little dangerous. (WS p14-15)

In spite of any acknowledgement of its limitations, however, participants persisted in using the internet as an information source. This uncritical value placed on textual data highlighted one of the most profound variances in academic practice between China and the UK (explored further below by XJ in a discussion about dissertations and plagiarism).

As discussed in the literature, China's dominant epistemological unitarism tends not to accommodate citation or the critical use of multiple perspectives in academic argument. This tended to encourage participants to depend on the internet for academic information and reinforced the somewhat pragmatic approach many took to their studies. It also illustrated the relatively limited shift in technical practices and implicit theories of learning in their engagement with UK academic conventions

Note-taking

In addition to understanding the use of information in the academic process, participants also identified integration of the products of study into assignments as a complexity in UK academic-writing conventions:

> I don't copy, not summarize, just write down the main point of what I have read (HLG p12)

> Normally I look for some books and just transmit the words from the books to my essay, just change the words. (YB p5)

> My approach is underline, use the pen, underline what is key word or very important and do very, very small brief notes on the book. (LG, p.17)

Participants were challenged by the dilemma of what to include and leave out of an essay, how to reduce large amounts of text by summarizing and how to make critical conclusions about their reading. They also struggled with basic processes such as note-taking and recording the outcomes of the teaching sessions. Some adopted a practice of underlining text to learn and recall later - in keeping within their previous study habits in China. Few, however, reported summarizing for meaning or systematically recording during independent study. For example:

> In daily working, I do some reading and log on to the Internet and have some articles to go through. And when I have a project I will go to library and read some books and borrow some books from the library and help me with my essay and website as well...For me, I have the habit is to just remember everything in my brain. I do not take notes. Just sometimes scan the paper. It's easier. (XJ, p.7)

Later, therefore, when attempting to use the products of their study in an essay, for example, participants reported confusion about accessing information previously gathered. Again, they felt unable to distinguish what was important in connection to a particular question from what was not.

To some extent, these technical challenges preoccupied participants through the year and became a key focus for their self-evaluation, adding into the emergent picture that they took a fairly instrumental overall approach to their studies. Certainly they were aware that their adopted study-patterns might not be the most effective, but felt less able to develop alternative strategies to improve the situation:

> I: So in terms of the way of learning, what do you think is the most challenging thing coming in the future, or do you think there is nothing new perhaps?
>
> XJ: I think the deeper topic, the deep of the research. Most of the time I research one topic, it is not enough to get a new style. (XJ p24)

What is clear from this, however, is that the scale of technical skill-acquisition participants needed to achieve was significant. It is unsurprising, therefore, that they spent a lot of time thinking and talking about it.

The dissertation and academic conventions

In exploring participants' overall approach to the writing task, especially as it related to research, the dissertation represented the major exercise. By the mid-point in the year, after they had submitted the dissertation proposal in January, participant accounts began to feature the dissertation specifically. Reflecting the group's overall approach to the writing element of assessment tasks, their key focus was less on the dissertation as a large piece of writing and more on subject content.

Generally students placed a low value on writing and organizing academic work compared to considerations of 1) content and 2) techniques of structure and format e.g. how to reference. This tendency focused on the instrumental details of learning rather than a broader conceptual or holistic view. It reflected, therefore, the approach they had previously adopted in China:

> The way I finish the dissertation is different in China. In China it is informal, I think. We just spend one month, two month, to get such information in journals a books and reorganize them, but here we should do some conclusion and recommendation. In undergraduate study, we just explain the whole thing and use others' opinion, like that. Even the teachers told us to express our own idea, but few student have their own ideas...Yeah, maybe the teacher tell us its very good, you know. Because that teacher also think it is difficult for us to finish a very good thesis...Here I mean the supervisor can help us a lot, but when I was in China, I just choose the topic and finish the draft and give it to my supervisor and she gives me some advice, not change a lot, but a draft and then finish. (HLG p22)

Others noted the differences in the dissertation's contribution to the study process as a means of reflecting more widely on Chinese and British academic cultures:

> Actually, the final dissertation at university it is not very, very important in China, but here it is important, I think. The point I'm saying is that [in China] it is hard when you enter the university; it is very hard. You have a strict examination. But when you enter the university, it is more easier for you to leave (to graduate)...So the final dissertation is like a process - you pass it. You have to go through and get a lot of

> information from website or from books, you can pick out and give it to the tutor. Most of the students don't want to have a very good mark. (XJ, p.7)

Within the context of both dissertation and assignments, the purpose of citation was representing knowledge as factually correct, using the words of a superior authority to do so. It was not about using a range of informed opinions to make an argument or critically reflect on the issues within a subject area. This showed a clear retention of the unitarist epistemology that participants articulated at the beginning of the project and resonated with the Chinese education literature (Woo, 1993; Zhaowu, 1998). In terms of evaluating a critical approach to the use of literature, however, a more contingent cultural view emerged in the way that students contextualized and understood the process of referencing and citation:

> Normally, just like I study here for more than half a year and to do lots of work just to understand other people's thoughts, just like translate, no just like paraphrase their thoughts in my own words, but basically those thoughts are theirs. It is not difficult. (CD p36)

> What I have learned I think is how to finish the essay, in two weeks or one week and search the information and make the reference to others. Because home students, I don't think they have their own idea or something but they can get a good score in the coursework. The just quotation, quote some words and references other words. I don't know why. Because in China the teachers always encourage us to have our own ideas in the coursework. We must have our own idea. But here I am confused about the marks for the courseworks. (HLG, p. 31)

Overall, therefore, both the writing process and the dissertation highlighted the main tranche of academic skills participants had to acquire over the year and in which cultural conventions between China and the UK differed. To a large extent, many of the specific questions participants asked me during the interviews related to these skills-based topics: how to reference, what kinds of information to read, how to develop academic-English skills. Some participants made significant progress, in their own accounts, over the year in these areas (discussed below). The majority remained confused about the about the broader epistemological context of their studies, however, although they developed academic skills ad hoc to meet the tangible

requirements of assessments. As noted above, one of the key strategies participants developed to manage this contradiction between technical style and conceptual framework was to objectify their experiences within a distinctly British or 'western' cultural paradigm. To some extent, therefore, they failed to internalize the new learning experiences and did not engage with transformational learning to any extent. This in itself perhaps underlined the retention of aspects of previous implicit theories of learning, given the lack of focus on transformational or personal learning within the Chinese context. Their approach to learning in the UK was, therefore, consistent with their own accounts and the general expectations about Chinese students in the literature. It was also consistent with the focus they possessed on certification rather than deep learning as a prime motivation for undertaking study in the UK. Moreover, it highlighted the group's ability quickly to identify and assimilate requisite skills to be 'successful' in a new learning environment - resonating with Bigg's (1987) achieving orientation to learning. Interpreted in Chinese cultural terms, therefore, many of the students' main academic aims were broadly achieved. In terms of learning development within British concepts of deep learning, perhaps the outcome was less clear.

The students' self-assessment

The preceding sections developed themes from the interviews when the participants were discussing teaching and learning. The overall pattern that emerged showed a chequered pattern of development over the year in terms of implicit theories of learning. Students struggled with contradictions caused by the juxtaposition of their current context and previous experience, internalized some aspects of their environment, especially in the area of skills, and rejected others, particularly those which attached to long-held fundamental beliefs and values about education, learning and the human relationships. This final section of interpretation briefly explores the patterns that emerged by the end of the year, focusing particularly on the core group of students who participated in the whole set of interviews. This analysis provides a framework from which to explore the degree to which they individually changed their ideas about learning over the year and to investigate the implications for them, as they evaluated their experiences.

As participants progressed through the year, the conceptual separation between confusion about the broad intellectual context and epistemological underpinnings of their studies and competence in developing techniques and academic skills emerged quite strongly. In a general sense, however, when discussing learning as a whole, participants showed little perception of change in their basic orientation to study or identity as learners:

> I'm afraid there is no change. (QWY, p.28)

When broadening out the discussion, however, to generally evaluate the experiences of the year, the focus shifted in an interesting way. Most participants who continued to the end of the project noted that the key benefit they had gained from their time in the UK was personal and academic independence:

> Before I came to Britain, I haven't lived alone. My parents looked after me. But here, everything you should do yourself, so I think this should improve the life skill, yeah. (PT, p.45)

Many assessed this freedom as stemming from simple geographical distance from home. For others, however, the sense of independence was driven as much by the approach to study in which they had been engaging over the year as from living outside the immediate family circle:

> I think British education, the most benefit is the independent study, yeah. You must investigate a topic by yourself to find information, to write and to think the structure and then to write. I think it is helpful. (YMX, p. 40)

In many of the accounts this sense of self-determination contributed strongly to a feeling of heightened confidence, especially where their academic performance had improved. Given the discussion above, personal confidence was an important factor in determining their interactions in both academic and personal environments. This feeling of confidence directly contributed, therefore, to participants' sense of their achievements at the end of the year. Nonetheless, when considering their generally low perception of change, it seemed that their general levels of intrapersonal

reflection had not developed in the ways that much of the UK literature about criticality and deeper learning would suggest desirable (Frazer, 1992; Barnett, 1997). Earlier questions about the validity of UK-based interpretative frameworks for assessing students' levels of change remain appropriate, therefore. In their own terms and in the terms determined by their earlier Chinese educational context, the group had progressed consistently: developing higher levels of existing practical skills as learners, acquiring new knowledge about a subject discipline and improving language and independent problem-solving skills. Nonetheless, their sense of their own engagement with intellectual critique, personal reflection or pluralist epistemologies - cornerstones of a British assessment of successful deep learners - showed them to be less developed as learners than the former criteria.

The most interesting aspect of the end-of-year evaluation was that to adequately reflect on their development over the year, participants' accounts focused outside the academic context and into assessment of wider life-worlds. As a final statement of the development of their perceptions, therefore, this suggested that participants' well-formed, boundaried conceptions of learning and education were largely unable to accommodate the broad, transformational changes inherent in their time in Britain. To some extent, therefore, it could be argued that their own implicit theories of *learning* remained relatively unchallenged. Their implicit theories of *self*, however, seemed to have developed more profoundly over the year.

Conclusion

Overall, analysis of the interview transcripts highlighted a wide range of information, illuminating the project's initial questions. First, that participants' responses to a year of UK study were mixed. The majority underwent some change and development during the year, however, mainly in the area of skills-development and knowledge-acquisition, and were able to reflect on these experiences. Second, individual transcripts showed clear thematic and contextual similarities, enabling collective analysis and resonating with the literature and the student profiles generated in chapter two. Broadly, therefore, this chapter has responded to the project's initial objectives in presenting the themed-stories of the group and their experiences during

the year, bringing together the accounts to illuminate the key preoccupations participants explored in their conversation. Key questions remain unanswered in this preliminary analysis, however, which address the more profound analytical aspects of the work - the meaning and value participants placed on their year in the UK and the profundity of the changes in underlying implicit theories of learning. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Concluding discussion

This section draws together the analytical and descriptive elements of the project-work in a return to the primary research questions. It aims to bring together the educational outlines and learning profiles developed in the literature review and, using the interview and survey data from chapter five, to compare them with study participants' lived experiences. The chapter concludes with a brief assessment of the main insights I gained into working with Chinese students through the conduct of the project, together with a conclusion.

The participants, their stories and the literature

One of the project's central questions was to draw out how far participants' accounts resonated with the themes about Chinese and British students and education established in the literature review. As noted throughout, the emphasis in the project was on rich illumination of the individual accounts rather than achieving broad generalization. Notwithstanding this interpretative emphasis, however, there were some clear elements in the participants' accounts which reflected themes within the established literature. In part, I have indicated this at points in the previous chapter. Drawing together the data from **figures one** and **two**, and linking it to the themes established in the previous chapter from the student accounts, it is possible to make the resonances explicit.

Firstly, in making an assessment of the students' collective orientation to learning based on their previous experience of education in China, their accounts highlighted a series of structural characteristics and themes discussed about Chinese education and the UK (**figure three**). In a number of ways, participants' struggles to accommodate the differences in approaches to education and learning during their year in the UK and their commentary on their previous study in China supported the broad themes established in chapter two. In particular their accounts highlighted the structured, teacher-centred emphasis on propositional learning in China, compared to a more student-centred, discovery-based procedural emphasis in the UK. At the same time, the accounts also highlighted the relatively limited extent of transition and change that

the students underwent during their year in the UK and identified that much of their experience was confined to explicit *learning about* learning in the UK rather than *participating in* the implicit cultures of learning reflexively. Their experiences, therefore, largely illustrated the considerable human effort of accommodating two different culturally-articulated notions of education and learning in a relatively short period of time. These themes are further developed in **figure four**, which compares the notional models of Chinese and British students and the status of the study participants as they developed over the year.

What emerges from the comparison in **figure four** is that the starting-point in the academic year for participants aligned closely to the model of the Chinese student within the literature. Given the highly normative and uniform structure of education in the PRC, this is relatively unsurprising. Moreover, participants' views, attitudes and recollections of their previous learning correlate closely to other accounts of Chinese students and education (Gallagher, 1998; Turner and Acker, 2002). Equally, it is clear that though the majority of participants attempted to move away from their arrival orientation to accommodate the demands of UK study, this proved to be very difficult. For most, their emphasis on achieving this through attempts to explicitly acquire knowledge-based techniques or methods for improved learning was also consistent with the tangible propositional assumptions which had underpinned their previous education. The minority who experienced both the highest levels of understanding of the UK system (and academic success) were also those who expressed the highest degree of personal emancipation and independence during the year (for example, PT and WS). They were also the oldest in the group, with either previous work experience and/ or previous exposure to international companies and people. All of these factors together coalesced to enable a more open response to their new context and an enhanced reflective ability from both Chinese and UK perspectives - embracing an implicitly reflexive, pluralistic position. For the majority, however, both academic success levels and accounts of personal happiness were lower. For some (e.g. HLG, YMX), this resulted in a rejection of the UK orientation to learning and expressions of feelings of anger and unhappiness at their treatment by the university. It seemed for them that the emotional pain involved in the experience was considerable and required externalization to come to terms with. For LG, the initial shock of the experiences in the first semester was sufficiently great to prompt

abrupt departure from the UK in January. For others (CD, for example), linking into their original purposes which were not exclusively academic, their attempt to adapt to the UK context involved a relatively simple, instrumental accommodation - with the aim of satisfying the extrinsic objective of obtaining a degree certificate. To a large extent, therefore, the students' experiences and motivations roughly conformed to Biggs' (1999) and others' (e.g. Ramsden, 1992) assessment of learning motivations as surface, deep or achieving. Notwithstanding this broad consonance, however, the main theme emerging from this aspect of the project's work was an account of the emotional turbulence accompanying the intercultural transition between educational systems. For all participants, whatever their ultimate academic or personal destination, the journey over the year involved considerable suffering and enforced personal reflection in ways that tended to undermine confidence and, for some, the ability to more forward effectively. A key theme for further exploration in an environment of continuing international exchange, therefore, may be within the affective aspects of inter-cultural learning and integration of pedagogical and pastoral strategies to scaffold learning development for international PG. students.

For the majority of students in this study, the experience of a one-year Master's in the UK was not a happy one. Moreover, in academic terms, most participants also questioned its usefulness, though personally they valued highly the experience of living overseas for a year and acknowledged the contribution of a Master's degree in future employment. The extrinsic values of the experience were clear, therefore, while the intrinsic aspects remained more ambiguous. Pedagogically, this factor presents a number of implications for the continued development of one-year programmes and invites further exploration of their underlying objectives, design and organization. The structure of such degrees certainly seemed to increase the learning challenges imposed on the students involved in the project. The intensity of the teaching programme - front-loading much of the structured and assessed teaching into the first part of the academic year when students are newly-arrived in the UK and unfamiliar with British HE conventions - imposes significant challenges on international learners who may require six to nine months to make successful learning transitions to a new educational environment (Egege and Kutieleh, 2003). In addition, the focus on culturally stylistic writing and discursive approaches, relatively low-levels of overall contact with academics and the employment of large-scale

independent pieces of work in the form of dissertations as major indicators of academic success, combine to make such degree structures particularly unsuited to the community of international learners for whom they are notionally designed. Their initial attractiveness to students is their brevity. Ultimately, however, the participants in this research noted the shortness of the programme and the steepness of the cultural learning curve as one of their key drawbacks.

Figure three: study participants and education systems

Aspect	China	United Kingdom	Participants
Construction of knowledge	Unitarist, propositional - emphasis on learned facts	Pluralist, procedural and propositional - emphasis on learning architecture	Essentially unitarist - high emphasis on propositional learning; skills-driven development of procedural learning; for some a pluralist perspective developed
Intellectual designation	Scholasticism - Intellectuals inherent to machinery of State and Society	Criticality - intellectual autonomy	Socially normative in some ways; struggles with criticality - however strong sense of self-determination and personal autonomy articulated by majority
Competitive dynamics	Personal, individualized competition	Individual and collaborative against an external standard	Highly competitive and individualized approaches to competition and learning
Pedagogic orientation	Didactic, teacher-centred	Facilitative, student-centred	Uncomfortable with student-centred learning environment; disillusioned when lecturers do not take a didactic role
Breadth of curriculum	Narrow - strict focus on vocational and scientific subjects	Broad - humanities, sciences and vocational subjects (?narrowness developing post-massification?)	Not tested
Conceptions of learning	Learning process relatively untheorized, regarded as undifferentiated and largely tacit in learning outcomes	Learning discourse is explicit - taxonomy of learning e.g. deep and surface approaches, learning process internalized in learning outcomes	Procedural learning developed explicitly for some; for most, an undifferentiated and uncritical view of the process of learning - limited to understanding academic 'techniques', skills and UK academic conventions - a cultural exercise, little internalization.
Learning objects and outcomes	Tangible, objective - universally shared by learners	Less tangible, more subjective - personal to learner, as well as group	Seeking tangible and common learning objectives, clearly articulated and shared. Difficulty in articulating changes in personal orientation within personal constructs of learning at the end of the year.
Correlation between learning and Labour	Effective learning is the result of labour	Effective learning is influenced by cognitive ability and other factors	Highly focused on hard work and its relationship to success; failures frequently regarded as failure of effort, not ability
Learning context	Learning is absolute - uninfluenced by context	Learning is situational - context matters	Struggled with learning and its cultural context; general recognition that learning was different in the UK - some accepted the differences, some rejected them
Learning and society	Learning is socially normative	Learning is personally emancipatory	Difficulties in accepting diverse peer motivations, especially in group work; high value placed on the emancipatory nature of the year in the UK and independent learning
Higher Education and society	State HE is highly elitist; private sector developing rapidly - attendant quality assurance issues	Rapidly developing Massification of HE	Not tested

Figure four: Model students and real people compared

The 'model' Chinese student	The 'model' British student	Participants
Young, unmarried, full-time student	Any age, studying through many patterns	All between 22 and 25; unmarried
Works hard to achieve results - the harder working, the better the student	Combines hard work and trained / natural ability	Focused on hard work - striving to be a 'good' student through hard work; self-recrimination for poor effort; sought emotional reassurance in research interviews
Passive learner, listens to the teacher and studies privately	Active learner, asks lots of questions and participates vocally in class	Frequently embarrassed to ask questions in class; limited participation - an emotional issue; sought reassurance in research interviews
Learns mainly by reading and processing knowledge	Learns by combining a range of learning skills - an active, problem-solving-based learner	Focus on reading and remembering; some took notes - found problem-solving learning challenging
Responds to teacher direction obediently and adopts both structures and substance of study according to teacher direction	Meets the teacher's suggestions with independent mind and imagination, studies in trained but personalized style	Sought guidance from lecturers; adapted own approaches to study where environment was highly unstructured and independent; some put off work where insufficient guidance was given
Combines intellectual capability and 'good' moral behaviour - a good citizen	Intellectual and moral behaviour not an inevitable combination - the development of individual ethics	Somewhat critical of UK students on moral grounds; sought to meet expectations of family by doing consistently well
Highly competitive with others in cohort, strives to be the 'best'	May strive to 'do one's best' against the standard	Highly competitive; disappointed with poor marks; actively benchmarked personal performance against groups in the cohort
Does not question accepted norms and ideas in the classroom	Takes a critical stance on knowledge and learning	Struggled with criticality - most used research interviews to explore conceptions of learning and critique
Learns within defined disciplinary rules and boundaries	Contextualises learning and relates learning to other aspects of life in a holistic manner	Seeking the 'way' to succeed in the UK system - looking for rules; differing levels of independence emerged over the year

The pattern of development over the year: implicit theories in action

Building on the themes identified in the previous section, the other underlying key question for the project was to explore how far the students' implicit theories of learning changed during their year in Britain. Again, **figures three** and **four** illuminate this question. In spite of the students' own assessment of their development during the year, an exploration of the survey and interview data together showed a

complex pattern of change and stability, of conflict, challenge and resistance as each of the participants was exposed to a new learning context within a new environment. The main areas in which these patterns could be seen lay in the students expectations of themselves and how they developed.

In terms of the point at which the students felt that they had begun to acquire new skills in the learning process, the first assessment was an important watershed. Essentially, having worked though the first set of coursework assessments in December / January, the students were able to talk about tangible new aspects of the learning and to discuss how they had responded to the need to develop new skills. As noted above, for some, this discussion facilitated personal reflection and questioning about their underlying approach to learning, for others the focus was more instrumental, resting on the explicit aspects of successful assessment technique. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the main focus of the skills development that participants noted was in the technical areas of academic work - essay-writing, information searching skills etc. This was supported by the new skills they were developing in group-work, though the students articulated less enthusiasm for those activities and regarded general interpersonal skills as outside the formal learning process.

An interesting issue within this context is the generally low level of awareness that participants' showed of shifts in their orientation to learning. Participants' accounts largely focused on the technical / instrumental aspects of the learning process when identifying progress or development, rather than relating skills-acquisition to any fundamental changes in view about the context and epistemological composition of the learning. For example, WS noted that he cited references in essays because it was a UK academic convention, part of assessment requirements, not because he believed it to be useful. These incidences illustrated both a maintenance of the obedient, ' passive-receptive' student persona (Biggs 1999; Gay, 2003) - just doing what's necessary to pass and what the teacher required, not asking questions, keeping opinions to oneself - and was another example of the essentially unchanging conceptual framework with which participants evaluated their learning experiences.

What emerged clearly from the accounts about attitudes towards teaching and learning and the participants' expectations of relationships with lecturers also attested

to the persistence of pre-existing implicit theories. These aspects of the interviews illustrated the difficulties that participants experienced in shifting towards a new mental framework from which to evaluate their learning experiences. Overall, the response typifying attitudes to new behaviours and new styles of classroom interaction was to judge them negatively based on criteria established in China. Nonetheless, certain other aspects of the new environment were accommodated into an emerging set of evaluation criteria from which to judge experience. The degree to which participants shifted their fundamental values and beliefs in this context, however, seemed fragmented and patchy - certainly the dominant underlying factors remained relatively unchanged.

Developing this aspect of an essentially constant constitution of implicit theories over the year was participants' maintenance of an instrumental approach to learning in the new environment. For example, opinions about the contribution of lecturers to the learning process seemed widely and strongly held. Paradoxically, participants retained the belief of changing themselves to accommodate new conditions, while maintaining behaviour patterns that drew on their previous context and might not have been useful. For example, they did not easily approach lecturers to ask questions or to clarify aspects of the modules, in spite of numerous suggestions I made over the course of the interviews. Partly this was because of perceptions about limited access to lecturers. Partly this evolved because participants felt lecturers were unfriendly and did not wish to risk rebuff and loss of face. It seemed clear that, in terms of cultural interfaces and communication exchanges, participants encountered significant emotional difficulties in accommodating their new cultural environment and integrating their experiences into the context of their existing values. Nonetheless, they maintained a discourse of adaptation and openness to change at times at odds with the approach they took to making sense of their experiences.

What is clear is that participants engaged in an ongoing process of managing the conflict between espoused theory and theory-in-use. Their fundamental, implicit values for assessing, contextualizing and making sense of their formal learning experiences, while tested, seemed largely unchanged over the year. Nonetheless an active sense of self-determination and independence in their broader lives seemed also to stem from the patterning of learning experiences in which they had engaged. To

this extent, it is clear that the group's implicit theories both of learning and self had shifted, though not without an emotional struggle, as discussed above. Linking this with the simple fact that their previously unitarist conception of learning had been confronted with the playing out of a different epistemology suggested a strongly-present but almost unrealized articulation of a shift in the underlying implicit theory for the students as a group. The brevity of their experiences over a single academic year may account for its relatively unrealized presence and may also account for their inability to articulate its presence other than in general life terms.

Have participants' implicit theories of learning changed?

Overall, the emerging pattern of shifts in implicit theories of learning shown by the group over the year is counterintuitive. On the one hand, participants' self-perception was that they had changed only in the acquisition of new educational skills and knowledge and that their attitudes to learning remained relatively unaffected by their experiences in the UK. The interview data certainly seemed to support that their underlying sense of selves as learners was indeed relatively unchanging over the year. On the other hand, they all seemed aware of shifts in the emotional and practical manner with which they negotiated their personal lives, related in some way to their learning experiences. In this way, their implicit theories of learning in their broadest sense did, indeed, develop. The untested question touches the profundity of these changes. Both the literature and the interview accounts support a view of Chinese students as adaptable and flexible to new learning environments, but in a framework where the learning process remained objectified, not touching the individual deeply. In such a context, it is interesting to consider whether the emergent sense of independence and self-determination remained explicitly with the participants after their return home or whether it was somehow 'boxed' within the cultural dynamics of their UK life-worlds and not part of their ongoing personal development.

Personal and professional reflections

There is no doubt that this project has exerted a profound influence on my professional practice and sense of self. In many ways, this was surprising to me. Having already worked with Chinese students for a number of years in the university

context, both in China and in the UK, and researched the subject of Chinese education for some time, when I set out on the project I felt that I could anticipate some of the likely outcomes of the work. I also maintained a sense of professional self that, I believed, took into account student diversity. For example, I consciously designed teaching interventions and assessment strategies to meet the needs of a range of students and different learning styles and offered high levels of student contact outside of the classroom compared to my peers at UH. From the beginning, however, the project took me by surprise because of the relatively high levels of personal contact that I experienced with the students in the study group compared to others that I had worked with in the past. What I realized, as I worked through the months of the project was that my orientation to the students and to my professional position in the university existed very much within a British cultural framework and that I had always maintained and protected my emotional distance from students, almost completely separating my professional and personal life. To a large extent, that dualism began to disappear as the project progressed. The students came to talk with me about a range of personal issues - from broken windows and getting laundry done to problems with classmates in group work - in the course of their discussions about education and learning, though most of these talks were off-tape. They were also interested in my personal life as well as our professional contact. My decision to leave the institution half-way through the year tended to enhance that effect. When I returned for interviews after leaving UH, the students greeted and treated me as an old friend. It was clear that they both trusted me and enjoyed the contact that we had together. Indeed, some who participated in the study told me that, given the little contact they had with British people over the year, I was their only friend (e.g. HLG). I have to say that I found this very sad, though it went some way to explaining the deep sense of hurt and anger some participants expressed when I asked them to look back over the experiences of the year and evaluate them.

In terms of specific teaching and learning issues, it became clear in the project that the participants studied in ways that were different from the common, implicit student norms operating in my institution and governing lecturers' working assumptions. It was also apparent that accommodating these UK culturally-implicit norms which underlay teaching, learning and assessment strategies was difficult for participants and that they needed personal and emotional support to succeed academically.

Moreover, a sense of academic success was intrinsic to participants' general sense of well-being and confidence as they progressed through they year. In some cases, the simple provision of a clear pedagogical rationale for the nature of a particular educational convention in the UK - which I was able to provide in a matter of minutes - scaffolded their learning development considerably. Again, however, an ethical question intruded, which I have considered deeply since, about the degree to which - in a globally-connected educational world - it is reasonable to articulate academic success in an ethnically culturally-normative manner which inherently privileges the domestic cohort. It also encouraged a continuation with the conscious experimentation of teaching design and strategy I had embarked upon and a further exploration of the teaching and learning needs of other groups of international students.

In reflecting on professional practice, therefore, the main contribution that that project made for me is that it has encouraged me to trust the students more with myself. Certainly I can empathize more readily with students from China now than was possible before I carried out the project. I am also able to see that the combination of personal confidence and learning support are extremely important if students are to be both successful and happy in the course of their studies, especially when they are in the UK for a short time. I am willing to take more responsibility for individual and group welfare and, in many ways, see myself much more in the role of advocate, teacher and friend than was the case in the past. Within the construct of my current academic life, this is not an easy combination of roles to maintain. The professional emphasis in my professional environment is very much focused on scholarly pursuits rather than students. To balance obligations to research activity and teaching and student support is demanding. Nonetheless, striving to do so is much more ethically compatible with my professional and personal values and lets my conscience rest more easily.

What next: limitations and further research

As noted throughout the project, this piece of work was drawn as very small-scale and essentially to gently illuminate the phenomena of interest, rather than to make hard and fast generalizations about how all Chinese students engage with teaching and

learning. The specific limitations imposed by my sole researcher status, the time and the ethical implications of the conduct of the work were discussed in the methodology. However, it is important to finally reiterate the tentative nature of the project's outcomes and the opportunity to conduct more work within this area. As numbers of Chinese students grow, there is a clear requirement to understand both them and other international students better if the essence of the international educational exchange is to continue to blossom in the UK. Within this broad scope there are opportunities to develop further studies exploring the impact of increasing internationalization on practitioners in UK universities, as well as to develop projects to better understand the factors underlying student performance and the consonance between emotional well-being and educational performance for international students. In practical terms, considerable opportunity exists to explore definitions of critical thinking, for example, and to discover how to provide fast access for students from diverse backgrounds into the development of skills like this, which contribute significantly to academic competence and identity as it is defined in Britain. Overall, the range of future research opportunities for teaching practitioners such as myself and more theoretical researchers are extensive as the international student community continues to change the face of university life in the UK.

From a research viewpoint, this project was framed to evaluate data from a culturally-collective Chinese unit of analysis. Certainly, this focus enabled me to draw insights into the orientation of both individual participants and the group and facilitated the comparative-reflective, Chinese / UK aspects of the work. As the encoding and interpretation of the student accounts developed, however, I began to consider the trade-offs between the coalescence of data around both collective and cultural themes and the interpretative possibilities available in the individual stories as a unit of analysis. At the same time, the incipient tensions between an individualist theoretical frame - implicit theories - and a collective methodological focuses - social constructionism - interposed themselves. To some extent, therefore, the power of the individual stories that fuelled this piece of work have been made less visible by the interpretative emphasis asserted by its starting point. There is scope, therefore, to continue in further projects to develop the themes and issues raised from this work with different communities, where the individual interaction with the learning

experience comes more clearly to the fore and the richness of those personal experiences are emphasized to an even greater extent than has been possible here.

An end-point: drawing the threads together

In assessing the outcomes of the project, the most important conclusion attaches to questions about the relationship between implicit theories and practical actions to support student learning. It was clear that participants strove continuously to grapple with UK academic conventions and practices in an attempt to understand and evaluate their learning experiences in some kind of way, even if very limited. It was also clear that their practical efforts to work within UK epistemological and pedagogical assumptions were largely frustrated because of a lack of opportunities to explicitly contextualise and discuss these issues within the framework of formal learning on the programme. Essentially they were left to try and grasp UK academic culture almost piecemeal from those tangible practice-based aspects of life e.g. rules about referencing and plagiarism etc, to which, as students, they not only had access but also were required to master quickly in order to successfully obtain their degree. Throughout the interviews, the students made discussion of these techniques of study and used them both to illustrate and explore conception of learning in the UK. It is no surprise, therefore, that is in these areas that there is evidence of change in attitude in the student accounts. Essentially, any more fundamental shift in conceptions of their learning context was impossible because those conversations did not take place within the boundaries of their studies and there were few other places to generate them. In a limited way, their conversations with me over the course of the year enabled them to ask questions, explore context and concepts which would otherwise have been impossible. Such opportunities remained relatively limited, however, given the nature of the contact we had and did not encompass sufficient depth to allow them to deeply penetrate the cultural epistemology of their day-to-day experiences. As a result, participants' underlying cultural ideas and attitudes, values and belief about what constructed learning and education and their practice remained undiscussed and inviolate.

In a global sense, perhaps this lack of cultural change is not particularly important. The group were generally successful in their studies and received their degree at the

end of the year. It was also clear, however, that much of what they experienced in terms of learning remained relatively superficial, at the level of skills and knowledge-acquisition or surface learning, which confronted notions of the deeper or transformational learning achievable within postgraduate study. It also seemed quite likely to me during the course of the interviews that, even for those among the group who performed well over the year, they could have done better and suffered less personal unhappiness had they had access to better evaluative frameworks from which to explore and make sense of their learning experiences. This assumption is inevitably untested. It was clear, however, that the burden of learning they undertook, especially in semester one, was far less about Business and was mainly focused on how to operate as a student in the UK. This focus inevitably detracted from deeper and richer potential learning experiences within the subject area itself.

The insights I have gained as an academic here are considerable, therefore: to make the context and rationales for the structures and practices of my teaching clearer; to emphasize attention on getting the techniques right and to explore the intellectual belief and value system behind them more. Those have been and continue to be invaluable in my teaching of all students, not just for those from China. At an institutional level, however, there are further potential insights to be gleaned and questions to consider. Primarily, how far the system and organization of taught PG. Degrees in subjects like Business and Management set Chinese students up for failure because we do not make sufficiently explicit the dominant cultural epistemology that underlies curriculum design, and focus instead on the tangible aspects of learning procedures. In one year, the students do not have the time to do much more than satisfice in their conformity to extrinsic degree standards because there are simply so many things to learn. Practically, such issues could be addressed through changes in policy, culturally-sensitive curriculum design, academic training and development and so on. More fundamental, however, remains the question of the viability of maintaining an academic system where, even at the postgraduate level, cultural aspects of pedagogy and epistemology are so implicit and embedded in systems and practices that they have become invisible.

Bibliography

Acker, A (1991), *Distribution of educational resources in China: a study of senior secondary schools in Haidian district, Beijing.* University of Cornell (unpublished MA thesis)

Ackers, Jim (1996), Evaluating UK courses: the perspective of the overseas student. From: McNamara, David and Harris, Robert (Eds.): *Overseas students in Higher education: issues in teaching and learning.* Routledge.

Agar, David (1990), Non-traditional students: perceptions of problems which influence academic success. From: *Higher Education,* vol. 19

Altbach, Philip. G (1996), *Comparative Higher Education: knowledge, the university and Development.* Comparative education research centre, University of Hong Kong.

Allinson, R. E (1989), An overview of the Chinese mind in Allinson. R. E (Ed): *Understanding the Chinese mind: the philosophical roots.* Oxford University Press

Alvesson. M & Deetz S. (1996), Critical theory and Postmodernism Approaches to Organizational studies in Clegg, S. Hardy, C. & Nord, W.(Eds) *Handbook of organisational studies.* Sage.

Argyris. C. (1992), *Organizational learning.* Blackwell business.

Argyris. C. & Schon, D. (1978), *Organizational learning: a theory of action perspective.* Addison-Wesley.

Argyris. C. & Schon, D. (1992), *Organizational learning II: theory, method and practice.* Addison-Wesley

Arnowitz. S & De Fazio. W. (1997), The new knowledge work in Halsey. A. H, Lauder. H, Brown. P, and Wells. A (eds.) *Education: culture, economy and society.* Oxford university press.

Bai. L. (2000), The metamorphosis of China's higher education in the 1990s in Keith Sullivan (Ed) *Education and change in the Pacific Rim.* Oxford University Press.

Barker, John (1996), The purpose of study, attitudes to study and staff-student relationships in McNamara, David and Harris, Robert (Eds.) *Overseas students in Higher Education: issues in teaching and learning.* Routledge

Barnett, Ronald (1990), *The idea of Higher Education.* Open University / Society for Research into Higher education. Buckingham.

Barnett, Ronald (ed) (1992), *Learning to effect.* Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University. Buckingham.

Barnett, R. (1997), *Higher Education: a critical business*. Buckingham Society for Research into Higher Education/ Open University Press. Buckingham

Baumann, Z, (1997), Universities: Old, new and different in Smith, A and Webster, F. (Eds.) *The postmodern university? Contested visions of Higher Education in Society.* Open University / Society for Research into Higher Education. Buckingham.

Beamer, Linda and Varner, Iris (2001), *Intercultural communications in the global workplace.* New York. McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Bennett. C, Foreman – Peck, L & Higgins, C. (1994), *Researching into teaching methods in college and universities.* Kogan Page.

Beard, Ruth and Hartley, James (1984), *Teaching and learning in Higher Education.* Harper education series

Belenky, Mary Field, Clinchy, Blythe McVicker, Goldberger, Nancy Rule, Tarule, Jill Mattuck (1986, reissued 1997*), Women's Ways of Knowing: the development of self, voice and mind.* Basic Books. Tenth anniversary edition.

Biggs, John, B. (1987), *Student approaches to learning and studying.* Australian Council for Educational research. Victoria.

Biggs, John, B. (1999), *Teaching for quality learning at university: what the student does.* Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham.

Biggs, John, B & Watkins, David, A. (Eds.) (1996), *The Chinese learner: cultural, psychological and contextual influences.* Comparative Education research centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Biggs, John, B & Watkins, David, A. (Eds.) (2001), *Teaching the Chinese learner: psychological and pedagogical perspectives.* Comparative Education research centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Biggs, John, B & Watkins, David, A, (2001), The paradox of the Chinese learner and beyond in Biggs, John, B & Watkins, David, A, (Eds.) *Teaching the Chinese learner: psychological and pedagogical perspectives.* Comparative Education research centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Blackstone, T. (2002). Why Learn? Higher Education in a Learning society, *Higher Education Quarterly*, 55, no 2

Blackstone, T. (2004), Staying attractive, *The Guardian*, 9 March. 2004. London.

Bond, Michael (1991), *Beyond the Chinese face: insights from psychology*. Oxford. Oxford university press.

Bone. A. & Bourner. T. (1998). Developing university managers, *Higher Education Quarterly*, vol. 52, no 3.

Borgonjon. J & Vanhonacker, W. R. (1994), Management training and education in the People's Republic of China, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management.* Vol. 5 (2).

Bridges, David (2000), Back to the future: the Higher Education curriculum in the 21st century, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol. 30 (1), p.37-55

Broadfoot. P. (1998), Quality standards and control in Higher Education, *International studies in Sociology in Education.* Vol. 8, no 2.

Brock. A. (1997), *China: opportunities in the education and training market - franchising and distance learning.* A report prepared for the British Council, Beijing.

Brown. P & Lauder, H. (1997), Education, globalization and economic development in Halsey. A. H, Lauder, H. Brown, P. and Wells, A. (Eds.) (1997) *Education: culture, economy and society.* Oxford university press.

Brockbank, A. & McGill, I. (1998), *Facilitating reflective learning in Higher Education.* Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University. Buckingham.

Bruner. J (1996), *The culture of education.* Harvard University press.

Chan, Carol K.K. (2001), Promoting learning and understanding through constructivist approaches for Chinese learners in Biggs, John, B. & Watkins, David, A. (Eds.) *Teaching the Chinese learner: psychological and pedagogical perspectives.* Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Chan, David and Drover, Glenn (1996), Teaching and learning for overseas students: the Hong Kong connection in McNamara, David and Harris, Robert (Eds.) *Overseas students in Higher Education: issues in teaching and learning.* Routledge

Chan, Kwok-Wai (2003), Hong Kong teacher education students' epistemological beliefs and approaches to learning, *Research in education,* vol. 69, pp. 36-50

Chan W. K. K. (1998), Tradition and change in the Chinese business enterprise: the family firm past and present, *Chinese studies in history* vol. 31 (3-4). M. E. Sharpe.

Channell, Joanna (1990), The student-tutor relationship in Kinnell, Margaret, (ed) *The learning experiences of overseas students.* The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University press. Buckingham

Chen Jingpan (1994), *Confucius as a teacher: philosophy of Confucius with special reference to its Educational implications.* Foreign languages press Beijing.

Chen. T. H. (1974), *The Maoist educational revolution.* Praeger.

Chen Xianda (1999), The modern value of traditional Chinese culture, *Social Sciences in China*, Spring 1999

Chen. Y. (1999), Tradition and innovation in the Chinese School curriculum, *Research in Education,* no. 61

Cheng Kai-Ming (1994), Young adults in a changing socialist society: post-compulsory education in China, *Comparative Education* vol. 30, 1

Cheng Kai-ming, Jin Xinhuo and Gu Xiaobo(1999), From training to education. Lifelong learning in China, *Comparative Education* vol. 35, 1

China Daily, 01/01/2001, Chinese students studying overseas. (accessed via Cernet: www.edu.cn./20010101)

Claxton, G. (1996a), Implicit theories of learning in Claxton, G. Atkinson, T et al (Eds) *Liberating the learner: lessons for professional development in education.* London. Routledge

Claxton. G (1996b) Integrated learning theory and the learning teacher in Claxton, G. Atkinson, T. et al (Eds) *Liberating the learner: lessons for professional development in education.* London. Routledge

Claxton. G, Atkinson. T et al (Eds) (1996*) Liberating the learner: lessons for professional development in education*. Routledge

Cleverly, John (1994), "On the evidence before me..." Putting the case for educational reform in China, *Comparative Education* vol. 27, 1

Cohen. L, and Manion. L (1994), *Research methods in education*. Routledge

Committee of Vice-chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the UK (1995), *Recruitment and support of international students in UK Higher Education.* London

Confucius, (2000, translation), *The Analects*, Everyman Press. London.

Corson, David (2000), The eclipse of liberal education in the twenty-first century? *Educational Review*, vol. 52 (2).

Cortazzi. M (1993), *Narrative analysis.* Falmer Press

Cortazzi, Martin and Lixian Jin (1996), Communication for learning across cultures in McNamara, David and Harris, Robert (Eds.) *Overseas students in Higher Education: issues in teaching and learning.* Routledge

Cortazzi, Martin and Jin Lixian (2001), Large classes in China: 'good' teachers and Interaction, in Biggs, John, B. & Watkins, David, A. (Eds.) *Teaching the Chinese learner: psychological and pedagogical perspectives.* Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Cottrell, Stella (2003), T*he study skills handbook (second edition),* Basingstoke. Palgrave Macmillan.

de Court, Erik (1996), New perspectives on Learning and Teaching in Higher education in *Goals and purposes of Higher education in the 21st century.* Jessica Kingsley publishers

Cua, A. S. (1989), The concept of Li in Confucian moral theory in Allinson. R. E (Ed) *Understanding the Chinese mind: the philosophical roots.* Oxford University Press

Currie, Graeme and Knights, David (2003), Reflecting on a critical pedagogy in MBA education, *Management Learning,* vol. 43 (1), p. 27-40.

Dearlove. J.(1997), The academic labour process: from collegiality and professionalism to managerialism and proletarianism? *Higher Education Review,* vol. 30, no 1.

Deem. R. (1998), "New managerialism" and Higher education, *International studies in Sociology in Education.* Vol. 8, no 1

Deem, R. (2001), Globalisation, New Managerialism, Academic Capitalism and Entrepreneurialism in Universities: is the local dimension still important? *Comparative Education*, vol. 37, no 1

Denscombe, Martyn (2003), T*he good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Maidenhead. Open University Press.

Denzin, Norman. K, Lincoln. Yvonna. S (1994), Introduction: entering the field of qualitative research in Denzin, Norman, K. Lincoln, Yvonna, S. (Eds) *Handbook of Qualitative research.* Sage

Denzin, Norman, K. Lincoln, Yvonna, S. (2000), Introduction: the discipline and practice of qualitative research in Denzin, Norman. K, Lincoln. Yvonna. S (Eds) *Handbook of Qualitative research.* Sage.

Devos, Anita (2003), Academic standards, internationalization, and the discursive construction of "the international student", *Higher Education research and Development*, vol. 22, no 2, pp. 155-191.

Dopson, S. & McNay, I. (1995), Organizational culture in D. Warner and D. Palfreyman (Eds.) *Higher Education Management*. Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham

Drew, Sue and Bingham, Rosie (2001), *The student skills guide*, Aldershot. Gower

Duke, C. (1992), *The learning university: towards a new paradigm?* Buckingham SRHE/ Open University Press. Buckingham.

Earwaker, John (1992), *Helping and supporting students: rethinking the issues.* The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham

Economist, the (2003a), Chinese students: Western promise, March 29-April 4 2003. P.33. London

Economist, the (2003b), Education in China: a private matter, March 29-April 4 2003. P.65-66. London

Edwards, Ron, Crosling, Glenda, Petrovic-Lazarovic, Sonja and O'Neill, Peter (2003), Internationalisation of Business Education: Meaning and implementation, *Higher Education research and development*, vol. 22, no 2, pp. 183-192

Egege, Sandra and Kutieleh, Salah (2004), Critical thinking: teaching foreign notions to foreign students, *International Education Journal*, vol. 4, no 4, pp. 75-85

Elliott, Geoffrey (1997), Learning and teaching in post-compulsory education: a lifelong perspective, *Research in Post-compulsory Education*, vol. 2, 3

Ellis. C, Bochner, A. P. (2000), Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: researcher as subject in Denzin, Norman, K. Lincoln, Yvonna, S. (Eds) *Handbook of Qualitative research.* Sage

Ellis. C, Bochner, A. P. (1996) *Composing ethnography*. Altamira press

Elsey, Barry, (1990), Teaching and Learning in Kinnell, Margaret, (ed*) The learning experiences of overseas students.* The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham

Elsey, Barry and Kinnell, Margaret (1990), Introduction in Kinnell, Margaret, (ed*) The learning experiences of overseas students.* The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham

Entwistle, N. J. (1988), *Styles of teaching and learning: an integrated outline of educational psychology for students, teachers and lecturers*, London. Fulton

Entwistle, Noel and Tait, Hilary (1990), Approaches to learning, evaluations of teaching, and preferences for contrasting academic environments, *Higher Education*, vol. 19

Epstein, Irving (1988), Special educational provision in the People's Republic of China, *Comparative Education,* vol. 24, 3

Erikson, E. (1965), *Youth and the evolution of identity in Childhood and society.* Penguin. London

Etzkowitz, H. Schuler, E. and Gulbrandsen, M. (2000), The evolution of the entrepreneurial university in Jacob, M. and Hellstrom, (Eds.) *The future of knowledge production in the Academy.* Society for Research in Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham.

Evans. Linda and Abbott. Ian (1998) *Teaching and learning in Higher Education.* Cassell education

Fagerlind, Ingemar and Saba, Lawrence, J. (1989), *Education and national development: a comparative perspective.* Butterworth-Heinemann

Flowerdew, Miller and Li (2000), Chinese lecturers' perceptions, problems and strategies in lecturing in English to Chinese-speaking students, *RELC*, vol. 31, no 1.

Frazer, Malcolm (1992), Promoting learning in Barnett, Ronald (ed), *Learning to effect.* Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University Press. Buckingham.

Fu, W. (1996), *Cultural flow between China and the outside world throughout history.* Foreign languages press. Beijing.

Fuerwerker, A. (1998), Doing business in China over three centuries, *Chinese studies in history,* vol. 31 (3-4). M. E. Sharpe

Fulmer, R. M. and Keys, J. B. (2004), A conversation with Chris Argyris: the father of organizational learning in Starkey, K, Tempest, S. and McKinlay, A. (Eds.) *How Organizations learn: managing the search for knowledge.* Second edition. Sage

Gallagher, Tony (1998), *In their own words: profiles of today's Chinese students.* China books and periodicals. Beijing.

Gay, Geneva (2003), Culture and communication in the classroom in Samovar, Larry, A. and Porter, Richard, E. *Intercultural communication: a reader.* Belmont. Thomson Wadsworth.

Glaser, R. (1998), Education for all: access to learning and achieving usable knowledge, *Prospects*, vol. 28 (1)

Goldman, Merle (1981), *China's intellectuals: advise and dissent*. Harvard University Press

Goodman, David (1996), The People's Republic of China: the party-state, capitalist revolution and new entrepreneurs in Robinson, R. and Goodman, D. (eds) *The New rich in Asia: mobile phones, McDonald's and middle-class revolution.* Routledge, London/New York, pp. 225-243.

Gough, Leo (1998), *Asia meltdown: the end of the miracle?* Capstone

Gow, Lyn and Kember, David (1990), Does Higher Education promote independent learning? *Higher Education*, vol. 19

Green. A. (1997), *Education, Globalization and the nation state*. Macmillan

Gu, Peter Yongqi (2003), Fine brush and freehand: the vocabulary-learning art of two successful Chinese EFL learners, *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 37, no 1, pp. 73-101

Habermas, J. (1978), *Knowledge and human interests*. Heinemann. London.

Hall, Edward, T. (1976), T*he silent language*. Intercultural press.

Hamilton. D (1994), Traditions, preferences and postures in applied qualitative research in Denzin, Norman, K. & Lincoln, Yvonna, S (Eds) *Handbook of Qualitative research.* Sage

Hannum, E. (1999), Poverty and Basic-level Schooling in China: equity issues in the 1990's, *Prospects*, vol. 29, no. 4.

Hantrais, L. and Mangen, S. (1996), Methods and Management of cross-national research in Hantrais, L. and Mangen, S. (Eds.) *Cross-national research methods in the social sciences.* Pinter. New York

Harris, R. (1995), Overseas students in the United Kingdom university system, *Higher Education,* vol. 29, pp. 77-92

Hawkins. J. (1974), *Mao-Tse Tung and education*. Linnet books.

Hawkins. J. (1983), The People's Republic of China (mainland China) in Thomas, R. M. & Postlethwaite, T. N. (Eds.) *Schooling in East Asia*. Pergamon Press.

Hayer. J (1996), Overseas scholarships: Culture shock or learning opportunity? in Claxton. G, Atkinson. T et al (Eds) *Liberating the learner: lessons for professional development in education.* Routledge, 1996

Hayhoe, Ruth (1984a) The evolution of modern Chinese education institutions in Hayhoe, Ruth (Ed) *Contemporary Chinese education*. Croom Helm

Hayhoe. R. (1984b), Chinese-western scholarly exchange: implications for the future of Chinese education in Hayhoe, Ruth, (Ed) *Contemporary Chinese education.* Croom Helm

Hayhoe, Ruth (1989), *China's universities and the open door*. Sharpe

Hayhoe, Ruth (1996), *China's universities 1895-1995: a century of conflict.* Garland Publishing

He Zhaowu (Ed) (1998), *An intellectual history of China.* Foreign languages Press. Beijing.

Henkel, M.(1997), Academic values and the university as Corporate Enterprise, *Higher Education Quarterly*. Vol. 51, no 2.

Henze. J. (1984), Higher education: the tension between quality and equality in Hayhoe. R (ed) *Contemporary Chinese education.* Croom Helm.

Ho, David. Y. F (1986), Chinese patterns of socialization: a critical review in Bond. M. (Ed) *The Psychology of the Chinese people*. Oxford University Press

Ho, Irene, T. (2001), Are Chinese teachers authoritarian? in Biggs, John, B. & Watkins, David, A. (Eds.) *Teaching the Chinese learner: psychological and pedagogical perspectives.* Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Hodges, Lucy (2001), A cultural revolution for the 21st century, T*he Independent,* Thursday 31 May 2001. London.

Hollinger, R. (1994), *Postmodernism and the social sciences.* Sage.

Holmes, B. (1984), A comparativist's view of Chinese education in Hayhoe, Ruth (Ed) *Contemporary Chinese education.* Croom Helm

Huang Jianyi (1997), *Chinese students and scholars in American Higher Education.* London, Praeger

Huckzynski, Andrej and Buchanan, David, A. (2004), *Organisational Behaviour: an introductory text.* Fifth edition. New York. Prentice Hall.

Humfrey, Christine (1999), *Managing international students.* Open University press. Buckingham.

Jarvis. P. (1999), Global trends in lifelong learning and the response of the universities, *Comparative Education.* Vol. 35, no 2 .

Jacob, M. and Hellstrom, T. (2003), Organising the Academy: new organisational forms and the future of the university, *Higher Education Quarterly*, vol. 57, no 1.

Jia Wenshan (2003), the Chinese conceptualization of face: emotions, communication and personhood in Samovar, Larry, A. and Porter, Richard, E. *Intercultural communication: a reader.* Belmont. Thomson Wadsworth.

Johnson, R.N. and Deem, R. (2003), Talking of students: tensions and contradictions for the manager-academic and the university in contemporary higher education, *Higher Education*, vol. 46, pp. 289-314

Jones, Alison (1999), The limits of cross-cultural dialogue: pedagogy, desire and absolution in the classroom, *Educational Theory,* summer 1999

Kempner, Ken and Misao Makino (1993), Cultural influences on the construction of knowledge in Japanese Higher Education, *Comparative Education.* Vol. 29, 2

Ketteridge, S. Fry, H. Marshal, S. (eds.) (1999), *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: enhancing academic practice.*

Kim, Hye-Kyung (2003). Critical thinking, learning and Confucius: a positive assessment, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, vol. 37 (1). P71-87.

Kinnell, Margaret (1990), The marketing and management of courses in Kinnell, M. (Ed) *The Learning experiences of overseas students.* Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham.

Kinnell, Margaret, (ed) (1990), *The learning experiences of overseas students*. The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham

Kipnis, A. (1997), *Producing Guanxi: sentiment, self, and subculture in a north China village,* Duke University Press, Durham.

Kobayashi, F. (1976), *Education in building Chinese socialism*. Institute of developing economies, Tokyo.

Krucken, G. (2003), Learning the 'New, New Thing': on the role of path dependency in university structures, *Higher Education*, vol. 46 pp. 315-339

Kuhn, Anthony (2000) Chinese re-examining schools, *The Post and Courier*, Grand Rapids, Michigan. January 20 2000

Larsson, Y. and Booth, M (1998), Attitudes to the teaching of History and use of creative skills in Japan and England: a comparative study, *Compare*, vol. 28,3

Law, Wing-Wah (1996), Fortress State, Cultural Continuities and Economic change: higher education in mainland China and Taiwan, *Comparative Education*, vol. 32, no 3 pp. 377-393

Lee, W.O. (1996), The Cultural Context for Chinese Learners: conceptions of learning in the Confucian tradition in Biggs, John, B. & Watkins, David, A. (Eds.) *The Chinese learner: cultural, psychological and contextual influences.* Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Leung. Y. M. (1991), Curriculum development in the People's Republic of China in Marsh. C & Morris. P (eds.), *Curriculum development in East Asia.* Falmer press.

Leung. Y. M. (1995), The People's Republic of China in Morris. P & Sweeting. A (eds.) *Education and development in East Asia.* Garland Publishing inc.

Li Jin (2003), U.S. and Chinese cultural beliefs about learning, *Journal of Educational psychology*, vol. 95, no 2, pp 258-267

Li Peng (1994), *Report at the National Conference on education.* Department of foreign affairs/ State Education Commission, People's Republic of China. Beijing.

Light, Greg and Cox, Roy (2001), *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: the reflective professional.* Paul Chapman publishing. London

Lin, Jing (1993), *Education in post-Mao China.* Praeger, 1993

Little, Angela (1992), *Assessment and selection in education in China.* Institute of Education working paper.

Liu Bin (1998), Communication and culture, *Social sciences in China*. Winter 1998
Liu, Sandra and Williams, Gareth (1995), The contemporary trend of Marketing Chinese universities in Hong Kong – an incoming rival to British counterparts in *Higher Education Quarterly*: vol. 49, 1, 1995

Lu Xun, (1978), *Selected stories of Lu Hsun*, Foreign Languages Press. Beijing

McGinn, N. F. (1997), The effect of globalization on national education systems, *Prospects*, vol. 27 (1).

McGreal, I. P. (1995), *Great thinkers of the Eastern world*. Harper Collins

McNamara, David and Harris, Robert (eds.) (1996), *Overseas students in Higher education: issues in teaching and learning*. Routledge

McNay. I. (1995), From the Collegial academy to corporate enterprise: the changing culture of universities in T Schuller (Ed) *The changing university?* Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University. Buckingham

MacFarlane, B and Otteweil, R. (2001), *Effective learning and teaching in Business and Management*. London. Kogan Page.

Martin, Elaine (1999), *Changing academic work: developing the Learning university*. Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham.

Marton, F. (1981), Phenomenography - describing conceptions of the world around us, *Instructional Science*, vol. 10

Marton, F. (1988), Describing and improving learning in R.R. Schmeck (ed) *Learning strategies and Learning styles*. Plenum. New York.

Marton, F. and Ramsden, P. (1988), What does it take to improve learning? in Ramsden, P (Ed), *Improving learning: new perspectives*. Kogan Page. London.

Marton, F. and Saljo, R. (1976), On qualitative differences in learning - Outcome as a function of the learner's conception of the task, *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 46, p.115-127

Measor. L, Woods. P (1991), Breakthroughs and blockages in ethnographic research: contrasting experiences during the "Changing schools" project in Walford. G. (Ed) *Doing educational research*. Open University.

Meissner, Werner (1995), New intellectual currents in the People's Republic of China, Teather, D and Yee, H (Eds.) *China in transition: issues and policies*. 1995

Meyer-Dohm , P, (1990),Graduates of Higher Education: What do employers expect in the 1990s? in Wright, P. W. G. (Ed), *Industry and Higher Education: Collaboration to improve students learning and training*. Open University / Society for Research into Higher Education. Buckingham.

Min, Jiayin (Ed), (1995), *The chalice and the blade in Chinese culture: Gender relations and social models.* The Chinese partnership research group. Beijing.

Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China, Department of Development and Planning, (2003), *Educational statistics yearbook of China*. People's Education Press. Beijing.

Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China, *Project 211 Universities*, www.moe.gov.cn. July 2004

Mok, Ida, Chik, P. Y, Ko, Tammy Kwan, Lo, M. L, Ference Marton, Ng Dorothy F.P, Pang, M. F, Runesson, U and Szeto, L.H, (2001), Solving the paradox of the Chinese teacher? in Biggs, John, B. & Watkins, David, A. (Eds.) *Teaching the Chinese learner: psychological and pedagogical perspectives.* Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong. Hong Kong.

Moon. J. (1999), *Reflection in learning and professional development: theory and practice.* Kogan Page. London.

Mortimer, Kathleen (1997), Recruiting overseas undergraduate students: are their information requirements being satisfied? *Higher Education Quarterly*, vol. 51,3, 1997

National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997), *Higher Education in the Learning Society.* HMSO.

New Star publishers (1996), *Development and reform of China's educational system in the 1990s.* Beijing.

Partington, Geoffrey (1988), The concept of progress in Marxist educational theories, *Comparative Education*, vol. 24, 1

Pennycook, A. (1994), *The cultural politics of English as an international language.* Longman.

Pepper, Suzanne (1991), Post-Mao reforms in Chinese education: can the ghosts of the past be laid to rest? In Epstein, I. (ed) (1991) *Chinese education: problems, policies and prospects.* Garland publishing

Pepper, Suzanne (1996), *Radicalism and education reform in 20th-Century China: the search for an ideal development model.* Cambridge University Press.

Price, R. F. (1970), *Education in Modern China*. Routledge. London

Punch, K. (1998), *An introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches.* Sage, California

Ramsden, P. (1988) (Ed), *Improving learning: new perspectives*. Kogan Page. London

Ramsden, P. (1992), *Learning to teach in Higher Education*. Routledge. London.

Reed, Linda, A. (1988), *Education in the People's Republic of China and U.S.-China educational exchanges*. National Association for Foreign student affairs. Washington D.C.

Reich, R. (1997), Why the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer in Halsey. A. H. Lauder, H. Brown, P. and Wells, A. (Eds.) (1997), *Education: culture, economy and society*. Oxford university Press.

Reid, D. J. and Johnston, M. (1999), Improving teaching in Higher Education: student and teacher perspectives, *Educational Studies*, vol. 25, 3

Rosen, S. (1984), New directions in secondary education in Hayhoe, R. (ed) (1984), *Contemporary Chinese education*. Croom helm

Rosen, S. (1991), Political education and student response: some background factors behind the 1989 student demonstrations in Epstein, I. (Ed), *Chinese education: problems, policies and prospects*. Garland publishing

Ross, H. (1991), The "crisis: in Chinese secondary schooling in Epstein, I. (ed), *Chinese education: problems, policies and prospects*. Garland.

Rowland, S. (1997), A lover's guide to university teaching? *Educational action research*, vol. 5 (2)

Ryan, Janette (2000), A guide to teaching international students. Oxford, OCSLD

Saljo, R. (1991), Introduction: culture and learning, *Learning and Instruction*, vol. 1.

Samovar, Larry, A and Porter, Richard, E. (2003), Understanding intercultural communications: an introduction and overview in Samovar, Larry, A. and Porter, Richard, E. *Intercultural communication: a reader*. Belmont. Thomson Wadsworth.

Sang Bing (1998), The study of traditional Chinese learning and Western learning in the later Qing and Republic of China period, *Social Sciences in China,* Winter 1998

Schofield, J. W. (1993), Increasing the generalisability of qualitative research in Hammersley, M. (Ed) *Educational research: current issues*. Open University

Schuller, T. (1995), The changing university? A sketch-map with coda, in *The changing university?* Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham.

Scott, Peter (1995), *The meanings of mass Higher Education*. Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. Buckingham.

Sellers, M.N.S. (Ed) (1994), *An ethical education: community and morality in the multicultural university*. Berg, Oxford/Providence. USA.

Sharper, K. and Qiuhong Ning (1998), The training of secondary modern languages teachers in England and China: a comparative analysis, *Compare,* vol. 28.1

Seybolt, P. J (1973), *Revolutionary education in China.* International arts and sciences press.

Shen Fuwei (1996), *Cultural flow between China and Outside world throughout history.* Foreign languages press. Beijing.

Shotnes, Stephen (1987), *Overseas students – destination UK?* UK Council for Overseas Student Affairs.

Silver, Harold and Silver, Pamela (1997), *Students: changing roles, changing lives.* Society for Research into Higher Education and the Open University. Buckingham.

Slaughter, S. and Leslie, G. (1997), *Academic Capitalism: politics, policies and the entrepreneurial university.* John Hopkins University Press

Smith, Mark (1998), *Social Science in question.* The Open University.

Spence, J. (1996), *God's Chinese son.* Harper Collins.

State Education Commission of China (1998), Educational statistics yearbook of China – 1992-1997

State Education Commission of China (1994), *The graduate education in China.* Department of foreign affairs, Beijing.

State Education Commission of China (1995), *Education law of the People's Republic.* SEC, Beijing.

State Education Commission of China (1996a), *Basic education in China.* SEC Beijing.

State Education Commission of China (1996b), *5-year plan for education and development towards year 2010.* SEC Beijing.

State Education Commission of China (1996c), *Introduction to education in China.* SEC Beijing.

State Education Commission of China (1996d), *Regular and Higher education in China.* SEC Beijing.

Strauss, Anselm and Corbin, Juliet (1998), *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* Sage

Szalay, Leonard, B. Strohl, Jean, B. Fu, Liu, Lao, Pen-Shui, (1994), *American and Chinese perceptions and belief systems: a People's Republic of China-Taiwanese comparison.* Plenum press New York.

Tasker, M. and Packham, D. (1994), Government, Higher Education and the Industrial Ethic, *Higher Education Quarterly*. Vol. 48, no 3.

Tennant, Mark(1994), *Psychology and adult learning*. Routledge.

Thomas. R. M. (1983), The two Chinas - a prologue in Thomas. R. M. and Postlethwaite. T. N. (eds) *Schooling in East Asia: Forces of change*. Pergamon press.

Thorens, J. P. (1998), Globalization, academic freedom and university autonomy, *Prospects,* vol. 28(3).

Tierney, W. G. (2000), Undaunted courage: life history and the postmodern challenge in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (second edition). Sage, California

Triandis, Harry (1988), Collectivism vs. individualism: a reconceptualisation of the basic concept in cross-cultural social psychology in Verma, G. K and Bagley. C (Eds) *Cross-cultural studies of personality, attitudes and cognition*. Macmillan.

Tsui, Anne, S. Farh, Jiing-Lih, Xin, Katherine, R. (2000), Guanxi in the Chinese context in Li, J. T, Tsui, Anne, S, and Weldon, E. (Eds.) *Management and organizations in the Chinese context*. Macmillan

Tsui Kai-yuen (1998), Economic reform and attainment in basic education in China, *China Quarterly*

Turner, Y. (2000), *When an unstoppable force meets an immovable object: Chinese students in UK universities*. Proceedings of European Learning styles Conference, June 2000.

Turner, Y. and Acker, A .(2002), *Education in the New China: shaping ideas at work*. Ashgate, Basingstoke.

Valentine, C. W. (1956), *The normal child and some of his abnormalities: a general introduction to the psychology of childhood*. Penguin. London

Van der Molen, Henk, J. (1996), Creation, transfer and application of knowledge through the Higher education system in *Goals and purposes of Higher education in the 21st century*. Jessica Kingsley publishers

Vidich, A.J. and Lyman, S.M.(2000), Qualitative methods: their history in sociology and anthropology in Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research*. London. Sage

De Vita, Glauca (2001), Learning styles, culture and inclusive instruction in the multicultural classroom: a business and management perspective, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, vol. 38, pp. 165-174

De Vita, Glauca (2002), Cultural equivalence in the assessment of home and international Business Management students: a UK exploratory study, *Studies in Higher Education,* vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 221-231

Walford. G. (Ed), (1991), *Doing educational research*. Open University Press.

Wang Chenzhi (2000), *The revival of private education in reforming China.* An online paper, http://Irs.ed.uiuc.edu/students/cwang2/pepaper.html

Watkins, D. and Ismail, M (1994), Is the Asian Learner a rote learner? A Malaysian perspective, *Contemporary Educational psychology*, vol. 19

Watkins, D and Regmi, M. (1991), the Asian-learner-as-rote-learner-stereotype: myth or reality? *Educational psychology*, vol. 11

Watson, D. (2002), Can we do it all? Tensions in the Mission and Structure of UK Higher Education, *Higher Education Quarterly*, vol. 56, no 2

Weiner, R. et al (1997), *Living in China: a guide to teaching and studying in China including Taiwan and Hong Kong.* China books and periodicals.

Winter, Richard (1989), *Learning from experience: principles and practice in action research (with contributions from Susan Burroughs)*, London. Falmer

Wong, Jan (1997), Red China Blues. Bantam

Woo, Henry, K. H. (1993), *The making of a new Chinese mind: intellectuality and the future of China.* China Foundation (Hong Kong)

World Bank (1997), *China 2020.* World Bank New York.

World Bank (1997), *China: Higher Education reform*. World Bank, New York.

Wu. D. Y. H, (1992), Early childhood education in China in Feeney, S. (ed), *Early childhood education in Asia and the Pacific*. Garland Publishing inc.

Yan, Z. (1998), Brain drain from Chinese universities in the 1990s, *Journal of contemporary China,* vol. 7 (17)

Yeung, A. S. Chui, H. and Lau, I. (1999), Hierarchical and multidimensional academic self-concept of commercial students, *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, vol. 24, 1999

Zhao, Yong and Campbell, Keith, P. (1995), English in China, *World Englishes*, vol. 14, no 3.

Zhaowu, H. (1998), *An intellectual history of China.* Foreign languages press, Beijing.

Zhixin Su, Jilin Su et al (1994), Teaching and learning Science in American and Chinese high schools: a comparative study, *Comparative Education*, vol. 30, 3

Zhong Mei (2003), Contemporary social and political movements and their imprint on the Chinese language in Samovar, Larry, A. and Porter, Richard, E. *Intercultural communication: a reader.* Belmont. Thomson Wadsworth.

Zhou Yan (1998), Brain drain from Chinese universities in the 1990s, *Journal of Contemporary China,* vol. 7, 17

Zhu, M. (1999), The views and involvement of Chinese parents in their children's education, *Prospects*, vol. 29 (2).

Zou Ji (1992), The assignment of jobs to college graduates in Timothy King and Zhang Jiping (Eds) *Case studies of Chinese economic reform*. Economic development institute of the World Bank

Appendix One: International students in British Universities

A fundamental part of the context in which Chinese students come to the UK to study is as an international student, within a large and heterogeneous community in UK universities. The main focus of the project was to explore participants' experiences from the standpoint of their individual and ethnic backgrounds. At the same time, it would be unwise to ignore the broader context and any influence it might exert on both their day-to-day experience and on their conceptualizations of learning or performance. This appendix briefly summarizes the history of international students in UK HE, with a discussion of some of the key practical issues which confronted project participants as international students in the UK and as assessment of the key implications for the study.

Empire and Commonwealth

International students have played a part in university communities for a very long time (Shotnes, 1987; various in Kinnell, 1990). Building on the traditions of intellectual migration established in the medieval European universities, nineteenth-century imperialism in Britain encouraged academic migration from the colonies, especially India, through a system of educational patronage for bright and wealthy students. Educational subsidies and patronage continued actively until 1979 with the introduction of the full-fee system for overseas students (Humfrey, 1999). Systems of academic patronage and support through scholarships and competition continues today, however, through the Commonwealth and notionally reinforces the inherited bond between the UK and Commonwealth countries. In addition, the flow of colonial students was supplemented by a steady growth in the numbers of other international students seeking to study in the UK after World War Two and especially after the expansions of UK HE in the 1970s and the 1990s. The evolution of the European Union added a further 'hybrid' group of European students to the overall composition of the 'international' student community in the UK, in the latter part of the twentieth century, as many students from Europe sponsored for study on programmes such as the ERASMUS scheme began to study in Britain. From the perspective of fees and classification, this group is agglomerated with domestic students. From the point of view of educational systems and the approach of individual students, however, these

students tend to be grouped with other overseas students in the majority of research studies.

Full fees and a change in student profile

The introduction of the full-fees policy at the beginning of the 1980s effected two main changes in the relationship between universities and international students. First, it eradicated many of the overt practices of academic and political patronage that had underpinned the composition of the international student community for so long, by opening up admissions to anyone who could meet institutional requirements. Second, it replaced the sole emphasis in admissions on scholastic merit with a broader-based policy, linked both to academic capability and an ability to pay fees (Kinnell, 1990; Humfrey, 1999). This latter aspect is particularly important in considering the motivations for universities to begin to recruit overseas students in proactive ways. From this time, recruitment activities very often took place by universities going out to approach applicants directly in their home countries - as many did in the 1980s - rather than taking the historically passive approach of waiting for applicants to approach the institutions themselves or through some institutional intermediary. From the 1980s onwards, therefore, successive restructuring of UK government funding for HE has created an strong imperative for universities to explore alternative methods of revenue generation. As a result, international student income on a full-fees basis has shown itself to be an attractive revenue stream for many institutions, especially among the 'post-1992', 'new' universities whose history of teaching vocational subjects such as Business, Engineering and Computer Science are among the most popular choices for many overseas students and which, as institutions, felt themselves to be equipped to cope with students of a different academic profile than that emphasised in more traditional universities in the UK.

Late twentieth century expansion

Throughout the 1990s, numbers of international students continued to grow. Universities developed expanded International Offices to focus exclusively on the recruitment of overseas students and gradually some institutions began to explore international collaborative links with overseas schools and colleges to stabilize and ensure continued flows of students numbers and revenues (Blackstone, 2004). In

1995, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals of the universities of the UK published a code of practice, establishing a framework for the recruitment and support of international students in UK HE, addressing such issues as marketing and recruitment, admissions, English language competence, assessment and student feedback (CVCP, 1995). Such policy documents represented an attempt to regularize the ways in which universities responded to the rapidly expanding, heterogeneous groups within the UK system.

The implications of diversity and pressures on quality

Not only did numbers grow, but the diversity of nationalities represented in the community also expanded rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s (Humfrey, 1999; various in McNamara and Harris, 1996). As noted above, the predominant composition of the international student group, historically, had been from colonies or ex-colonies managed via the commonwealth and then supplemented by students from other Member States of the EU. This met the political objectives of the UK government and had the advantage to institutions that many commonwealth education systems had been modelled, at least to some extent on the British - often using English as a teaching language and adopting the British system of "O" and "A" levels as the basis for standard assessments of educational achievement. Universities viewed this at the time as making the admissions process relatively seamless for home and international students alike and also appeared to minimize the extent of academic adaptation individual students would have to undergo on arrival in the UK. As universities began to recruit from further afield, however, so complications developed in the admissions process and the range of academic profiles and previous experience of students began to broaden and change. The result was an increased pressure on universities to make explicit their awareness of different students' needs and also to develop appropriate responses in the ways they met those needs while still maintaining their connections with the traditional - and majority - population, UK home students.

This pressure continued with the focus of the 1997 report of the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education on collaborative links between UK universities and overseas institutions (NCIHE 1997), which asserted the role of the Quality Assurance Agency in overseeing the maintenance of quality in an environment where it had

historically been unregulated and its insistence that the information and humane needs of international students coming to the UK for study should be regarded as an institutional priority.

Conclusion: historic pressures and contemporary motivations

In drawing together this brief overview of the history of international students in the UK, it seems possible to identify contextual issues that are likely to have a bearing on the shaping of the environment into which international students arrive. First, the long history of academic and educational patronage that developed in UK institutions proposes a relationship model where the benefits of the educational experience flow in one direction from the institution to the student. This colonial approach to education was explicit in the nineteenth century and shadows many of the contemporary systems, practices and attitudes which apply to international students (Pennycook, 1994; Humfrey, 1999). Second, the expansion of overseas student numbers coincided with reduction in government funding for universities. The active marketing of the UK HE 'brand' in the 1980s and 90s, therefore, seems largely motivated by the need for revenue generation. This 'commercial' motivation has linked strongly into the general discourse about the continued funding of education as a whole, its style and purpose (Leslie and Slaughter, 1997; Deem, 1998). It also asks some important questions about the level of reciprocity in the relationship between student and institution by reasserting the 'business' aspects of the transaction rather than the educational (Kinnell, 1990; Mortimer, 1997). It seems that a certain unease has accompanied the rapid expansion of overseas student numbers that has taken place within a university environment, which evolved with a primarily domestic constituency in mind. It is also clear that the large presence of international students has become subsumed within wider debates about the increasing commercialization of education. Active discussions about 'marketing', for example, and the identification of students as 'customers' are examples, perhaps, of creeping commercialism in HE.

There are two issues to be explored within this area, however. First, the question of services and support provided for international students, if, indeed, they are to be identified as customers. Various commentators have noted that levels of support vary drastically from institution to institution and sometimes very little is done to actively meet the CVCP code of practice (Humfrey, 1999). Instead, institutions tend to take a

more passive view of the support international students need (Earwaker, 1992). Second, the customer mentality has the tendency to reinforce a sense of direct reciprocity in the relationship between student and institution. Nowhere is this more apparent, perhaps, than in the notion of the 'diploma disease' where student maybe implicitly encouraged to expect to automatically receive a degree certificate in return for fees paid, irrespective of the quality of the teaching and learning experience or its outcome (Humfrey, 1999).

Implications for the study

Detailed consideration of the policy and structural issues confronting HE and its relationship with overseas students remains largely outside the purview of this project. Key issues confronting international students as a community within HE shape the environment for Chinese students and the particular context from which they come to the UK. In the mid-late 1990s the numbers of Chinese students in the UK rapidly increased, for example, especially after the Asian economic crisis of 1997 when universities - as a response to their need to maintain overseas student revenues - increasingly turned their attention to China as a significant far-Eastern market at a time when the Chinese government relaxed historic controls over international travel for its citizens. As discussed above, students from China came from an education system largely uninfluenced by the assumptions of UK or commonwealth and with its own set of cultural assumptions and from a society which had been largely closed to international influence for many years. They also derive from a culture very different from the UK, as second language speakers, and therefore are likely to have requirements for relatively high levels of support (Elsey, 1990; Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Hayer, 1996). Moreover, in the Chinese HE system, failure to receive a degree is almost unheard of (Turner and Acker, 2002). Combine these factors together with UK institutional motivation towards recruiting international students on a marginal cost basis - discussed above - at times providing patchy student support, into a system where international students fees are high and obtaining a degree certificate subject to rigorous assessment of student learning, and the potential for mismatch of expectation and experiences seems potentially high.

Overall, therefore, while the project's primary focus remains on the individual perspectives of the particular Chinese participants, it is important to remember that

they constitute part of a broad and heterogeneous community of international students and that this context is likely to influence their individual experiences to some extent. Within this context, it is important to note the generally inconsistent and poor overall levels of support that international students as a group have tended to receive during their education in the UK and the ways in which they have found themselves marginalized from the mainstream student community (Ackers, 1996; Channell, 1990; Reid and Johnston, 1999). An additional aspect of the project's framework, therefore, will be to explore the students' perceptions of themselves within this differentiated community in the university as well as within their general role within the cohort.

Appendix Two: The history and development of Chinese Education

Confucianism and the early Chinese education system

Historically education has played an important part in Chinese society since the introduction of a system of imperial government in the first century AD that formally adopted Confucian ethics and its basic principles of education at national level. Confucianism holds learning as a central value and privileges a social system in which mobility is based exclusively on educational merit. The expression of social status in Confucian China was demonstrated by occupation of office within the imperial civil service. This elite pathway was secured through the introduction of a sophisticated apparatus of formal imperial entrance examinations as the only legitimate gateway to high office and status in the Imperial age. In terms of the educational system, therefore, and following directly from Confucian ideology and the state apparatus, China developed and maintained a highly centralized indigenous education system that was extremely prescriptive in nature. The only permissible subjects for study were taken from the Confucian *Five Classics* and the *Four Books,* including *the Great Learning*, a Confucian text which prescribed methods for learning as well as its content. For hundreds of years the Chinese education system was also largely uninfluenced by external change, since imperial decree strongly limited exchange between China's citizens and foreigners. This ensured that the development of education in the country strongly reflected its internal social mores and maintained the exclusivity of Confucian philosophy and ethics as an educational influence until the late nineteenth century.

In spite of the emphasis on central control, however, the main mechanisms for the routine delivery of education in China were informal, relying on an adhocracy of individually hired tutors, commissioned by the (usually rich) personal sponsors of examination candidates to instruct them in techniques for passing the examinations. To this extent, China at one and the same time possessed a highly sophisticated educational network but educationally enfranchised very few. Illiteracy was extremely high until the mid/ late-twentieth century and gender discrimination against women and ethnic minorities - Confucianism imposes specific strictures against women engaging with learning, for example - remained total until the 1920s, and only made limited changes until the 1960s. In the Imperial era, however, acquisition of the

products of education and the articulation of learning, enshrined in the character of the Confucian scholar-gentleman, became the apotheosis of social success for the dominant group, Han Chinese men. The only examples of more formalized education institutions were the *shuyuan* - the academies - which functioned as crammers for students preparing to take the examination (Hayhoe, 1996). These were never officially sanctioned by the state, however, and sprang up usually around the charismatic teachings of an individual tutor. Indeed the state did not engage with any formalized system of educational institution until after them establishment of the first republic in the early twentieth century.

Intellectualism and educational philosophy

As noted above, Confucianism stood as the exclusive influence on Chinese education for several centuries. Enshrined within this prescriptive ethical code is a strong notion of the ethnic, moral and intellectual superiority of the people of the Middle Kingdom. This led to the development of a fundamentally inward-looking scholasticism which characterized legitimate intellectual pursuits in China and which remains something of an influence even in contemporary education, demonstrated by a notable lack of permissible critical activity in the classroom. One of the outcomes of this predominant scholasticism, however, was China's lack of 'modernization' and industrialization and its concomitant retention of feudal practices well into the nineteenth century. The education curriculum remained inflexible and the study of science and mathematics was marginalized. The path to deeper learning was regarded as meditative, involving repetition and memorization, which has often been characterized as rote learning (Mok et al, 2001). These factors taken together with political stagnation and isolationism contributed to the country's rapid loss of power in the face of the depredations of the industrial nations in the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth century reform and international exchange

The defeat in the Opium wars in the mid-nineteenth century and the development of the foreign treaty ports effectively forced Chinese society and education to open up to foreign influences for the first time. The main change that this effected in the systems

of educational delivery was the entry of the foreign christian missionary schools into the treaty ports and the Eastern coastal cities on the mainland. Though at first, these institutions were marginalized because of their primary aim of proselytizing students (Pepper, 1991), they soon became somewhat influential as educational centres for some Chinese people, especially those seeking to reform domestic political and educational systems and practices in ways more sympathetic to the 'modern' "West". One of the prime ways that the schools influenced education in China is that they represented the first organized and systematic attempts to bring education to the country and particularly emphasized greater equality of access to men and women. Importantly, the missionary schools also provided language education for the increasing number of people who in the late nineteenth century were taking the unprecedented step of going abroad for trade purposes or to study. In terms of higher education, the first western-style university, Beiyang Gongxue, was founded in Tianjin in 1895 (Hayhoe, 1996) and was rapidly followed by others in the capital and in important Eastern coastal cities, such as Shanghai.

Nineteenth century domestic reform efforts

In response to the rapid development of international influence in the country, a number of government officials began to explore ways in which to reconceptualize intellectual life and learning in China and to maintain a viable domestic approach to education in the face of the imposition of external practices. Though largely unsuccessful in generating energy for wide-scale internal reform - their primary objective - these nineteenth century movements introduced a theme into Chinese educational philosophy which has exerted an important influence on the nature of Sino-western academic exchange since. Kang Youwei, an influential Confucian scholar official developed the thinking of earlier reformers such as Guo Songtao and Feng Guifen by encouraging a modernization movement at the end of the nineteenth century which had at its heart an attempt to make education "modern-yet-Confucian". *Tiyong*, the central idea, is a complex construct that enabled Confucian scholars to 'borrow' aspects of western education and philosophy, especially in the military, technical and scientific disciplines and attempt to synthesize them within a framework of Confucian values and ethics: "Let Chinese learning be the essence and Western learning be the incidental" (He, 1998). In spite of its historical importance, however, *Tiyong* is a concept discussed in a relatively limited selection of the literature, mainly

education history produced in China (for example, He, 1998; Sang, 1998). At the same time, this notion underlines an important set of features which characterized the prevailing Chinese approach to external constructs of knowledge and learning. First, it discusses an intellectual separation between the incidents of learning and underlying beliefs and values, highlighting a separation of the instrumental and the transformational in the learning process. Second it reveals the essentially pragmatic nature of the approach to learning taken at the time, a separation of ends and means - useful knowledge can be assimilated and utilized without necessarily having a role in shaping the inner person. Last, it asserts a strong desire to maintain the domestic educational status quo in the face of increasing internationalism. All of which were themes that continued to echo within the evolution of attitudes in China to 'foreign' learning throughout the twentieth century and are still traceable into the contemporary scene.

Practically, Kang Youwei's reform movement was unsuccessful. The imperial examination system was abandoned in 1905 and the empire itself collapsed in 1911, after the first revolution, inspired by Sun Yatsen, who had himself been educated internationally (mainly in Japan). Intellectually, however, the philosophy of *tiyong* has remained influential since its inception. Importantly, this philosophy demonstrates a Chinese intellectual perspective which ascribes a symbiotic rather than an assimilative view towards domestic and international ideas about learning and seems manifested in a desire to place untouched something distinctively 'Chinese' in contextualizing learning experiences. Not only that, but the *tiyong* idea is distinctly traceable in the contemporary notions of 'dynamic Confucian' societies which retain much of the practical small-scale family morality of Confucianism but also embrace technical industrialization and its inherent internationalism (Chan, 1998).

Twentieth century

During the early part of the twentieth century, in the political vacuum that developed between empire and the founding of the People's Republic, various western-inspired educational experiments developed in China (Altbach, 1996; Cheng, Jin & Gu, 1999). Numbers of university students going abroad to study grew at an exponential rate. Many revolutionary leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, benefited from education in, for example, France, Japan, and the USA (Hayhoe, 1996; He et al, 1998, Sang, 1998).

Japan was a popular choice because it was widely regarded in China as an Asian nation which had successfully integrated the opposing philosophies of Western and Eastern thought in its education system (Pepper, 1991). By the 1920s, however, the USA's Dewian model had become more influential than many other approaches (Shen, 1996). The impetus for the wholesale adoption of non-indigenous approaches to education was partly political, in the fall of empire but mainly economic - a desire to acquire foreign-originated technical skills in order to 'modernize' China. Indeed, something of a love affair with the idea of the "modern" developed in the early twentieth century in China which has influenced not only the development of the educational system but also subjects favoured for study into the contemporary curriculum. At the heart of the early Republic was the desire to economically and scientifically modernize the country and to channel the benefit of increased economic prosperity into improving the lives of Chinese citizens. This has resulted in an extensive privileging of scientific and technical education, to almost the same extent it was eschewed in the imperial age, and the emergence of a construction of education which is as socially normative as the Confucian approach, but expressed according to differing criteria.

The People's Republic and the contemporary scene

At the end of the chaotic and war-riven turbulence of the early twentieth century and the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949 with Mao Zedong at its head, the primary aim of policymakers was the economic reconstruction of China and its industrial modernization along socialist lines. Mao regarded education as an important aspect of that transformation and attempted to embed another foreign-inspired model of education into the Chinese systems, this time from the Soviet Union (Pepper, 1991). The Chinese leadership regarded the USSR as well-progressed along the path of industrial modernization and therefore an appropriate example for China to follow. The government of the USSR was also willing to assist China with financial aid and technical expertise.

During this time the education system was formalized with universal primary education set as a key national target (Pepper 1991, Ross 1991, Rosen 1984, Kobayashi 1976). The tertiary sector was reformed to develop extensive technical and vocational education to support the economic objectives in the country. In spite

of the educational borrowing that took place, however, the thrust of education practice still followed some distinctly indigenous lines. For example, little emphasis was placed on pedagogic practice in teacher education, especially at university levels (Leung 1991, Chen 1999). This resulted in the maintenance of the Confucian didactic practice that had dominated classroom life before the revolution. Not only that but the revolution in China was predominantly peasant-inspired. The Chinese intellectual classes were traditionally conservative in their perspective and frequently voiced criticism of early Maoist policies, especially during national campaigns such as the Hundred Flowers Campaign (1956-7) (Hayhoe, 1996). As a result the political credentials of the intellectual class became suspect and both popularly and politically a strong current of anti-intellectualism began to emerge which had practical and philosophical influence over the shaping of Chinese education.

Another particular indigenous nuance in PRC education, compounded by the particular economic emphasis in the early Republic which favoured the development of industrial production, is the geographic split in provision. The Southern and Eastern coastal cities had traditionally been privileged in terms of education provision, at the cost of the rural, undeveloped West/ North. In spite of government pledges of universal educational enfranchisement, the reality remained that education was essentially an urban phenomenon and tertiary education in particular focused exclusively on the rich coastal areas, formerly the foreign treaty ports. Free universal education has never been sponsored as a practical possibility by the Chinese government. Rural communities in China were largely left with the *minban*, people's or community schools, which were set up and funded on an ad hoc basis by the local communities themselves and largely ignored by the State Education Commission or the provincial authorities.

Strong internal inequality of provision was also a key factor in the maintenance of the anti-intellectual current that erupted during the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and which destroyed all conventional provision of education for several years. Indeed, as has been a feature in a number of socialist societies (Partington, 1988) the tension between political credentials and intellectualism has characterized much of the unrest that has taken place since the People's Republic came into existence. The *red vs. expert* polarization in China, typifying the politics-intellect struggle (Hawkins 1983,

Acker 1991), not only precipitated the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) but also highlighted China's struggles to synthesize both the international and the domestic within a single construction of learning and education. At the end of the Cultural Revolution, when formal education was reinstated, the *Red* side of the equation had triumphed, with the establishment of the 'worker-soldier-student' model in HE. This notion placed equal importance on political, labour and intellectual education in the development of effective students. Courses of study, therefore, also modeled a combination of all three aspects and excluded formal educational assessments of intellectual attainment in any conventional sense. The political extremism that accompanied this educational approach, however, quickly proved untenable. After Mao's death, and the deposition of the Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping, Mao's successor, reversed all of the educational changes that had taken place and installed in their place a set of internationally-inspired reforms, which represented a return to the pre-revolutionary 'modernizing' agenda that had existed in the 1920s. Examinations and formal college entrance assessments were reintroduced, for example. Routine educational rustication was abandoned from the curriculum. Ph.D. degrees were introduced in 1982 (New Star 1996), where previously the research tradition had barely existed. In addition, foreign educators and foreign experts returned to China and began to influences its education practices (Henze 1984, Chan 1996). The *minban*, the rural schools, were legitimized by the government in the 1980s and academic life in China began slowly to return to its pre-Cultural Revolution form.

At the same time, the market reforms undertaken by the government began to stimulate the development of private education in many parts of urban China, encouraged by the need to reskill a country that found itself almost on the point of economic collapse (Henze 1984). Many of these institutions, after their legitimization in 1980, began to focus on practical training, such as language training, and became a key conduit for academic interchange in the country. For example, the first foreign-sponsored management development initiative began in Harbin in the north in 1980 and developed into an Master of Business Administration programme in 1982 (Borgonjon and Vanhonacker 1994; Chan 1996). In the late 1990s the government formally allowed foreign educational institutions to embark on education joint-ventures and to organize franchise operations on Chinese soil. These ventures certainly influenced the organization and structure of education in China along more

international lines. They also made a considerable contribution to the general broadening of education provision, especially for non-traditional students. Overall educational practice, however, remained relatively untouched and reverted to much of its old Confucian-inherited form. This was especially the case given that teaching is not regarded as a graduate profession in the country and most teacher education is focused on subject mastery not pedagogic matters (Sharpe and Ning 1998). Not only that but in 1997 fewer than 30% of university academics possessed more than a bachelors degree, with some in post lacking any recognized academic qualification at all (China statistical yearbook 1999 and Educational yearbooks 1992-1997). The system still appears to be discriminatory, with tertiary education only possible for 2.5% of the 18-22 year old age group (UNDP, 1999) and most education provision focused in the East coast. Women and ethnic minorities also remain disadvantaged at all levels in education, especially in a climate of increasing male unemployment throughout the country (Henze 1984, UNDP 1999). Overall, however, the macro structural and policy reforms that the government has undertaken in the past 50 years have achieved considerable results in educationally enfranchising many more Chinese citizens than had been the case only generations before. Marketisation has also assisted in providing *zifei* (self-pay) opportunities for those who would otherwise remain outside the system and has also increased the levels of educational exchange. At the same time, the history of Chinese education shows an uneasy symbiosis between indigenous and non-indigenous educational philosophies and practices which still appear to remain and are embedded in day to day classroom practices which are largely unchanged since the imperial era and which perhaps profoundly affect the ideas and perspectives with which Chinese students are likely to engage with the teaching and learning experience. It is important, therefore, to consider what descriptions of the contemporary teaching and learning environment exist in further shaping a notional profile and exploring the ideas of the research participants.

TEXT BOUND INTO

THE SPINE

a questionnaire

nnaire is part of a research project investigating the ways in which people can best learn in UK higher
t aims to find out some basic information about your thoughts and feelings about the relationship between
ation and effective learning.
e no more than about 15 minutes to complete. All responses will be treated confidentially. If you want more
about the questionnaire or the project, please contact: Yvonne Turner, Business School, University of
e on: 01707 285495 and I will be happy to talk to you.

estion, please tick the box next to the answer that most accurately represents your answer to the questions
se tick only one box for each question.

coming to the University of Hertfordshire, what was the highest level of education in which you d:

ool (O levels) ☐ Professional/vocational high school ☐ High school (A Levels) ☐
ocational college (FE College) ☐ University ☐

s your nationality

Other European ☐ Chinese - Mainland China ☐ Other Chinese ☐ Malaysian ☐
er international student ☐

at do you think is the main purpose of higher education

nore knowledge in a given subject ☐
hinking skills and all-round ability ☐
learning more about something I like ☐
skills useful for employment ☐
tificate to show my ability ☐
lification ☐

at do you think is the main purpose of learning

developing intellectual knowledge in a subject in order to achieve mastery ☐
acquiring practical skills and expertise ☐
developing confidence in oneself and one's own abilities ☐
o remember facts ☐
o see different points of view and use them in one's own way ☐

long do you think the process of learning lasts

always go on learning ☐
sh our development into maturity ☐
l of the formal education process ☐
y finished learning what I need to know for my life ☐

ch one of the following statements do you agree with most

to learn everything there is to know about a given subject ☐
le to learn the most important things in life, you have to experience them ☐
learn, the more you need to learn ☐

**)w effective do you think that formal mechanisms of assessment (exams/essays etc) are as an accurate
ıy of measuring your learning**

tive □
]
ffective □
all □

**ffective do you think that informal methods of assessment (self-assessment, informal discussion) are as a
asuring your learning**
ive □
|
fective □
all □

:h style of learning do you think most effective in helping you to learn

ure □
ganised group seminars □
› tutorials □
group work □
perience e.g. work placements □

style of learning do you like best

ure □
ganised group seminars □
› tutorials □
group work □
perience e.g. work placements □

fectively has your experience in higher education so far helped you to learn effectively

vely – it has met all my needs □
- most of my needs are met □
v of my needs are met □

state the reasons for you answer to question 17

_____

_____

_____

›r taking the time to complete the questions.

ıy other comments you would like to make in the space below

er

Appendix Four: Participant Brief

Chinese students studying in Britain -
a research project by Yvonne Turner, University of Hertfordshire

Introduction to the project

This study is a one-year research project which is part of broader research undertaken with the University of Bristol. It aims to explore the experiences of Chinese students who have come to live and study in Britain. The outcomes of the research will provide insights into your learning needs and ways in which British universities and educators can work more effectively to support you and other students who come to Britain in the future.

What the project involves

The researcher, Yvonne Turner, will work closely with a volunteer group of students who are involved in both post-graduate and undergraduate programmes of study. She will explore your thoughts and feelings about your studies throughout one academic year, in a series of interviews, carried out once a month, supplemented by two questionnaires, administered at the beginning and the end of the year. Yvonne will also interview some lecturers, administrators and student support counsellors as part of the project in order to explore a variety of viewpoints and to understand what universities are currently doing to support international students.

Confidentiality

All personal information contained in the research will remain confidential. Any information from the project that is subsequently documented or published will be given in a way that means no-one will be able to identify you. The outcomes of the research will primarily be recorded in a doctoral dissertation and then published in a series of papers intended for academic journals and conferences.

What you will have to do and what you will get out of the project

If you agree to take part, Yvonne will ask you fill in a questionnaire and to make time for a preliminary interview with her, probably in her office (W37). This will last between 30 and forty-five minutes and will aim to help you both get to know each other a little and to enable Yvonne to find out a bit of information about your background and your previous education. After that, she will ask you for an interview once each month, lasting about 30 minutes for the rest of the academic year. These meetings will be designed for you to talk about your studies and what has been happening in the past month and to think about what's been good and what you have found challenging. They will take place at a time that is convenient for you. Though Yvonne will be asking you for information about yourself, the interview times will also provide you with an opportunity to talk one-to-one to someone who is a member of the university staff about how things are going and how you are feeling about your time at UH. Yvonne will be happy to try to answer any questions and queries about how you organize your studies etc. The interview process is two-way and should be enjoyable and helpful to both of you. It is not intended to be a test or to find any kind of 'right answers', just to have a relaxed talk about your own ideas about your study at the university.

Contact information

Yvonne Turner is a lecturer at the University of Hertfordshire Business School. If you require any further information about the project, please contact her at: Room W37, Business School, University of Hertfordshire, Mangrove Road, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8QF, tel: 01707 285495, email: Y.1.Turner@herts.ac.uk .

The work is supervised by Dr Marilyn Osborn, Graduate School of Education, 8-10 Berkeley Square, Bristol, BS8 1HH, Tel: 0117 928 7008.

Appendix Five: Participant Questionnaire

Chinese students studying in Britain - an information questionnaire

Introduction

This questionnaire is designed to find out about your first experiences of living and studying in Britain. Please take a few minutes to fill out each of the questions. There are no correct or incorrect answers, just write down your own opinion. The questionnaire will take about 20 minutes to complete.
The information from the questionnaire will form the basis of the first interview that you have with Yvonne sometime over the next couple of weeks. Yvonne will not share the information with anyone else and will keep it confidentially.

Please write clearly in the spaces provided

1. Personal Information

Your name:

Your residential address:

Telephone - home:

Mobile:

Email UH:

Other email (if any):

Your age:

Your sex (Male/Female):

Your marital status (married/single):

Your programme of study:

Date you arrived in the UK:

What part of China you come from?

What is the best way for Yvonne to contact you (email, mobile phone etc)?

2. Your ideas about Britain before you arrived

2.1 Why did you choose to come to Britain to study?

2.2 What did you expect that the university would be like before you arrived?

2.3 What information did you have about studying and living in Britain before you arrived and where did it come from?

2.4 What did you think Britain would be like as a place to live?

2.5 What did you think you would like about Britain?

2.6 What did you think you would <u>not</u> like about living in Britain?

2.7 In what ways did you think studying in Britain would be different to studying in China?

3. Your first impressions of Britain

3.1 In what ways is living in Britain different from what you expected before you came? Why do you think that is?

3.2 In what ways is living in Britain the same as you expected before you came? Why do you think that is?

3.3 How is studying at the university of Hertfordshire different from what you expected and why?

3.4 How is studying at the university of Hertfordshire the same as what you expected and why?

3.5 What have you most liked so far in your life and studies in Britain? Why?

3.6 What have you most disliked so far? Why?

3.7 What is your opinion about studying at Hertfordshire and in China....are they similar or different? Why?

This is the end of the questionnaire.
Thank you for your time - I look forward to talking to you during our first meeting!
Yvonne

Appendix Six: Survey results

Q1. Highest levels of education and nationality

Nationality		First degree from university at point of entry to programme	Degree / diploma from vocational college at point of entry to programme
PG: UK	3	3	0
PRC	10	9	1
Other Chinese	1	0	1
EU	5	5	0
International	21	20	1
Total PG.	40	36 (86%)	3 (14%)
UG UK	83	-	-

Question 2: What do you think is the main purpose of Higher Education (HE)?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. To acquire more knowledge in a given subject	11	21	11	1	B	B	B /D=
B. To mature thinking skills and all-round ability	44	50	29	2	D	D	-
C. To have fun learning something I like	0	3	0	3	A / E=	A	A
D. To develop skills useful for employment	33	26	29	4		E / C=	E
E. To get a certificate to show my ability	11	3	6				
F. To get a qualification	0	0	24				

Q.3: What do you think is the main purpose of learning

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. A process of developing intellectual knowledge in a subject area in order to achieve mastery	33	29	11	1	A/B=	B	B
B. A process of acquiring practical skills and expertise	33	32	49	2	-	A	E
C. A process of developing confidence in oneself and one's own abilities	22	24	16	3	C	C	C
D. The ability to remember facts	0	0	1	4	E	E	A
E. The ability to see different points of view and use them in ones' own way	11	16	22	5			D

Q.4: How long do you think the process of learning lasts?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Forever, we always go on learning	100	99	99	1	A	A	A
B. Until we finish our development into maturity	-	-	1	2	-	-	B
C. Until the end of the formal education process	-	-	-				
D. I have already finished learning what I need to know for my life	-	-	-				

Q.5 Which one of the following statements do you agree with most?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. It is possible to learn everything there is to know about a given subject	0	6	6	1	C	C	B
B. It is impossible to learn the most important things in life, you have to experience them	33	40	70	2	B	B	C
C. The more you learn, the more you need to learn	66	54	24	3	-	A	A

Q.6. What do you feel about how people learn?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. No-one is born clever than other people, we are all basically the same. Learning is about your environment, not personality	22	18	9	1	C	C	C
B. Some people are born better learners than others and will always be better	11	13	20	2	A	D	D
C. Some people have an inborn advantage but we can all develop as learners over time	55	39	49	3	B/D=	A	B
D. We are all born the same, but some people develop more quickly than others in their lives	11	29	23	4	-	B	A

Q.7. Which of the following statements most clearly represents your feelings about learning? Learning is something that happens mainly....

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. When I am alone, thinking or reading	37	20	28	1	A	E	E
B. When I am listening to the	25	11	9	2	B/D=	A C=	A

lecturer							
C. When I am working with other students in a group	0	20	13	3	-	-	C
D. When I am talking to other students about my studies informal - not in the class	25	14	5	4	E	D	B
E. When I am working on an assignment or preparing for an exam	13	34	46	5	-	B	D

Q.8: Who has the main responsibility to make the learning process effective?

Response	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Yourself	33	39	41	1	C	C	C
B. The lecturer	11	13	0	2	A	A	A
C. Learning is a partnership between the lecturer and student	55	47	59	3	B	B	-

Q.9 How would you describe the appropriate nature of the relationship between student and lecturer?

Response	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Formal and impersonal, with no personal connection between them	0	14	6	1	B	B	C
B. Informal and friendly, lecturer and student develop a social and professional relationship	89	61	24	2	C	C	B
C. Open but professional, limited personal contact between lecturer and student focused on the course or subject	11	25	70	3	-	A	A

Q.10: How would you characterize the role of the lecturer in the learning process?

Response	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. The lecturer acts as a guide and mentor, supporting the student's development	62	53	45	1	A	A	A
B. The lecturer is the expert, who imparts knowledge to the student	0	11	9	2	C	C	C
C. The lecturer provides opinions for the student to think about and develop their own ideas	38	33	44	3	-	B	B
D. The lecturer listens to the students and facilitates their learning process	0	0	2	4	-	-	D

Q.11 What is the purpose of assessment in HE?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. It is the way in which students' skills are measured	75	81	88	1	A	A	A
B. It is a control mechanism to make sure that students do what the lecturers want	0	11	0	2	C/D=	B	D
C. It is the method the university uses to show the public it is doing its job	13	6	5	3	-	C	C
D. It is an educational convention that has no real meaning	13	2	6	4	-	D	-

Q.12. Which of the following do you think is the most effective method of assessment?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Examinations	22	15	19	1	B	B	B
B. Written assignments / essays	44	62	58	2	A/C=	A	A
C. Presentations	22	13	16	3	-	C	C
D. Self assessment methods	11	10	7	4	D	D	D

Q.13. How effective do you think that formal mechanisms of assessment (exams / essays etc) are as an accurate way of measuring your learning?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Very effective	0	10	7	1	B	B	B
B. Effective	66	62	67	2	C	C	C
C. Not very effective	33	21	23	3	-	A	A
D. No good at all	0	8	2	4	-	D	D

Q.14 How effective do you think that informal methods of assessment (self-assessment, informal discussions) are as a way of measuring your learning?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Very effective	11	21	14	1	B	B	B
B. Effective	78	66	55	2	A/C=	A	C
C. Not very effective	11	13	28	3	-	C	A
D. No good at all	0	0	2	4	-	-	D

Q.15 Which style of learning do you think most effective in helping you learn?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Formal lecture	33	13	8	1	A E	E	C
B. Formally organized group seminars	11	24	6	2	-	B	E
C. Small group tutorials	22	13	43	3	C	A C=	A
D. Student-led group work	0	8	3	4	B	-	B
E. Practical experience e.g. work placements	33	42	41	5	-	D	D

Q.16 Which style of learning do you like best?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Formal lecture	11	8	4	1	E	E	C
B. Formally organized group seminars	11	23	14	2	C	B	E
C. Small group tutorials	22	13	46	3	A/B=	C	B
D. Student-led group work	0	10	4	4	-	D	A/D =
E. Practical experience e.g. work placements	55	46	33	5	-	A	-

Q.17 How effectively has your experience in HE so far helped you to learn effectively?

Response (%)	PRC PG	Total PG.	UK UG	Rank order	PRC PG	Total: PG	UK UG
A. Very effectively - it has met all my needs	0	8	2	1	B	B	B
B. Effectively - most of my needs are met	67	67	82	2	C	C	C
C. Poorly - few of my needs are met	33	26	16	3	-	A	A
D. Not at all	0	0	1	4	-	-	D

NOTES:

1. Responses are presented in the form of percentages expressed from total number of conforming responses given for a particular question. On average 0.5% of the total answers were non-conforming for any question and therefore disregarded. Most commonly respondents making non-conforming responses either ticked multiple boxes on the form or omitted any response to that question.

2. In presenting the figures, totals may not add up to 100 as a result of rounding effects.

Appendix Seven: Sample transcript

PT Interviews
30.10.01
UH Office

I: All right. PT, that is you. (Yeah) And you are 24, and you are single and you come from Shanghai.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, P that is a very unusual name. It is a very nice name. Why did you choose that name?
P: It is a kind of bird, do you know this? Yeah, my Chinese name is like this and it is just translated to English.
I: Ah, so what is your Chinese name then?
P: HY.
I: So you like PT better than HY? THY or PT?
P: I don't mind. Because HY is in Chinese and P is in English, it is the same thing.
I: So do people generally use your Chinese name or your English name since you have been here?
P: English name generally.
I: Okay, some people …
P: If you can find a name that is the same meaning as your Chinese name, then that is good. But if you cannot, then maybe you can find some special word, but we had better find some word that is related to our Chinese name if you can. Yeah.
I: Yeah, lots of Chinese people pay a lot of attention to what English name they choose. And it is very interesting because in our lives, when we are born our parents will choose a name for us, but when we go to another country, we have the opportunity to choose a name for ourselves.
P: Yeah, because sometimes it is difficult to pronounce it for you or for many people so I think it is useful.
I: Yeah, it is. It is a very useful thing.
P: Yeah, it is better for somebody to remember you. If you tell them you are Tang Haiyan or something like this, they cannot remember you. They are always like ask what is your name? What is your name? But if you tell them your English name, they will remember you.
I: does it bother you that English people can't say your name correctly? Does it upset you, or don't you mind?
P: Uhm… actually I don't mind because it just depends on the pronunciation; it is not their fault. If you tell them Petrel, then they can remember it.
I: So it is good that you have been able to find a name that fits with your name in Chinese.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, tell me a bit about yourself and about your background, maybe start with telling me a bit about your family.
P: Uhm,… in my family I have a brother. He is older than me, three years. He is already married and has a son. Yeah, a very lovely boy.
I: Oh, right. And how old is his son?
P: Only several months.
I: Oh, right. So he is still quite small.
P: Yeah, quite small! Just like animal!
I: And your parents are they both still alive?
P: Yeah.
I: And what do they do?
P: My mother is an accountant and my father is in … how call it? A manager's state in the government. He is like a manager.
I: So is he in the government office in Shanghai or is he in the government office of all of China?
P: In Shanghai. Do you know the Bao Steel Group? It is a very big, very big steel company in China, government in China. He works here.
I: So he works as a manager in the state steel company.
P: Yeah.
I: What is the name in Chinese of his steel company?
P: Baogang Zichuan. Bao Steel. Beijing has the Beijing Steel Company and in Shanghai it is the Bao Steel Company, yeah.
I: Yeah, okay. I know this company. Okay. That is very good. And does your brother still live in Shanghai?

P: Yeah. He lives in Shanghai and works also in Bao Steel Company. This company is like a joint venture between a Japanese company and Bao Steel Company.
I: Okay. So your father works in the state part and your brother works in the joint venture part.
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Okay. Okay.
P: And last year he just come back from Japan. It was a two year training in Tokyo.
I: Oh, right. So it must have been very interesting for him.
P: Yeah, but he said the life in Japan is very boring because it is training and you just work, work, work. Because the Japanese is very hard work man! Very strict.
I: Yeah, so he is pleased to be home and meet with his girlfriend, or his wife and have a child.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay. Now let's talk a little bit about you. Can you tell me a bit about your education? What level of education did you have before you came to do your Master's?
P: Hmm, I graduated in 1998.
I: Was that from school or from university?
P: From university with a subject of foreign trade, from Shanghai University.
I: Okay, so that was Shanghai Daxue or Fudan University or Shanghai University?
P: Shanghai University.
I: Okay, and you studied for a degree, yeah?
P: Uh, huh.
I: And you graduated in 1998, so what did you do for two years before you came here?
P: I have two years experience. I worked in a Swiss company. I was the assistant to the company's general manager.
I: Oh, right. And what was the name of the Swiss company that you worked for?
P: This company produced (carols a carolling system ?)
I: What was the name of the company?
P: Uh, Datweiller.
I: Okay. And you were assistant to the general manager?
P: Yeah, the main assistant.
I: Oh, right. What kinds of things were you doing?
P: Just prepare some document for the general manager and focusing on the admin. and later communicate with the customers and arrange the meeting and business trip for the general manager.
I: why did you choose that kind of work?
P: Hmm... first nobody... if your course is related to the foreign trade just like foreign or international business, it will be better to work in a foreign company or in a joint venture or something like that. So you can find a job in a Swiss company, normally we think it is good and we don't mind what function you do. But you can do, because I am a girl and something like the admin. is good for a lady to do because it is ... how to say? Because it is very easy to control.
I: So it is manageable work.
P: Yeah.
I: So you think women need manageable work, do you?
P: (laughs) because the female is easier to control, because it is easier to do the housework... but admin. I know is not just like this but the usual style of this is just like the house work because Chinese always think the company is just like the family, so the female should do the house work of the family, so admin is better for a girl to do this.
I: So there are some kinds of work for men and some kinds of work for women.
P: Yeah, so many of the sales men should be a man. If you are a lady, you did your job like a sales man they will think, oh, you should be a powerful woman.
I: So what brought you to study business? Some people might say to study trade is something for men, not for women, huh?
P: But sometimes it is a very popular. It is a popular subject and it is easy to find job. It is very strange in China because it doesn't matter what you work for in the future, but what you learn should be popular. Maybe your job in the future will not be related to what you have learned.
I: so there is not a connection between your work and your study.
P: Yeah. In China you can find so many who graduated from college or from some experience school, but their job is not related to what they have learned. Even if the company wants to find a secretary, but they are also eager to find somebody, she has a high quality education, but in fact maybe it is not need to have this high education.
I: So what is education for then? If you don't think there is always a connection between what you study and what you do, then what is education for? What is the purpose of education?

P: Uhm, if high education it can prove that you are a high quality man.
I: So it is something about showing your quality.
P: Showing you are a quality man, yeah, maybe they don't need this quality. But if you can have a high quality, it is better. Why not!
I: So what, in what way does education show your quality? What kind of quality does it show that you can have?
P: Hmm... like the technical school, you should know how to use the computer, and like the language, you should speak the English very well. And like you can ... like some ... also special experience like some accounting and something else.
I: So sometimes parts of what you study like accounting or English are things you have learned in the past.
P: Yeah, if your subject is like education, just like education and you want to be a teacher, but if you have some language and some computer skills, you also can get a job in the like business company.
I: So sometimes there is a connection and sometimes there isn't?
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, that is helpful. Did you enjoy, in China, did you enjoy your studies at school, not at university so much, but did you enjoy your studies at school?
P: Hmm, yeah. In primary school I enjoyed it, but in middle school the work is very hard. You should know this, yeah? Because many, many students competing to, ... because in ten students only one maybe can have a chance to go to college or the university. In Shanghai it is better but in some just like Jiangsu Province or Hubei Province, they are competing very hard. Yeah.
I: So you have to work very hard.
P: Yeah.
I: In school, well, how about university—in university did you enjoy your studies?
P: Yeah. Because we have many time to learn something, just according to what we want to learn. Because in school we will learn according to what we will be examined on the paper. But in the university you have choice. You have some option and can choose just what you are interested and also you can have many leisure time to arrange your life.
I: Were the examinations also very important in university or was it a different kind of environment?
P: It is also very important, just like this. Because in Shanghai university the education system is very similar with the foreign education system. Yeah, we have, we also have three semester, one has ten weeks and an examination, and ten weeks and an examination, like this.
I: And what would happen if somebody were unsuccessful in their examination?
P: Hmm, you can get scholarship.
I: If they failed? What would happen if they failed?
P: Oh, failed. You should pay for it and you should stand again and you should try your best to pass it. If you do not, then you cannot get the diploma. It is the same here I think.
I: Can you take the examination again one time, or two times or many times. How many times can you take the examination?
P: Hmm, I'm not sure about it because I haven't failed!
(both laugh)
P: I have studied on a scholarship, but maybe ... at least three times I think.
I: So you can take it again several times.
P: Yeah, because you should pay for the chance to try again.
I: so the money means you can keep taking the exam.
P: Yeah.
I: did many people fail or did most people pass?
P: Depending on the course. Some course is very difficult, then maybe most of them will be fail.
I: Oh, right. So it depended on the course.
P: Yeah, it could be very easy. And it also depended on the lecturer. Some lecturer like to make the exam very difficult, and then the students will ... how to say, they cannot ignore this. They should work hard and then communicate with the lecturer, so the lecturer think that he or she is very important to them, so the feeling is good.
I: Okay. So the ... how easy or how difficult a course was, was connected to the lecturer's ideas rather than the courses being all the same standard.
P: Hmm, I think you can say this.
I: Did you do much course work at all in your university studies or was it all examinations?
P: I think half half.
I: And what was the purpose of the course work? Was that added to the exam to make the grade or how was the course work mark used in assessment?

P: It is different between China and here. Because in every course we have examination, and because here some course we haven't.
I: Yes, like in my course we haven't any exam.
P: Yeah. Because maybe, in my opinion, the examination is a very, how to say, structured way to examine what you have learned, but in China the lecturer will think if you do the course work, you can use books and maybe somebody can help you to do this. But in the examination it is in the middle, nobody can help you. You should resolve this yourself. So they think it is very fair to everybody.
I: So do examinations and course work measure the same kinds of things, or are they measuring different kinds of learning? What do you think?
P: Hmm, I think different kinds.
I: In what way are they different then?
P: Because I think in the lecturer's mind in China, they think the course work, ... if you don't like this subject or this course, you should still must finish this course work. You must spend some time to do this, so at least you do something for this work, but the quality of this course cannot say what you have learned, it cannot examine what you have learned, and finally, the examination is the only way to examine what you have learned.
I: So how do you feel about this? What do you think is the most effective way to measure what you have learned?
P: Hmm... in my opinion I think I am a good student! Even though we haven't a course work in some subject but just have the examination at the end, so if we have a course work, I will try ... If we haven't I also will reading this and I also will spend time to analyze these, the textbook, so I think it doesn't matter for me. The important thing is what you have done. Because you have time, why not learn some knowledge. It is good for you.
I: Hmm, hmm. So it doesn't matter whether there is an examination or not. It is what you put into the study that is important.
P: Yeah. Because you are here why you went to university, the purpose is that you want to learn something, not just the diploma. Because you will have work in the future so you should have this chance to live in the social, so ... it is very important.
I: Does it matter then... you know you said some things that you learn don't have a connection to your work, so how do they make a contribution? Why is it helpful if you learn something?
P: Because I think when you are talking to somebody, there are many topics. If you learn so many things, they will give you confidence. You will think I am better than this man. I know something, he doesn't know this. This feeling is good. And secondly, because in this, because you cannot say I am just do this job forever. I have many chance to do different jobs, because I have different knowledges and different choice to use, so if you learn more then you have more chance to choose.
I: So the more different things you learn, the more opportunities there are for you in your working life.
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Okay. That is very helpful. Thank you. Now let's talk a little about when you arrived in Britain and your impressions so far. You got here on the 18th of September, and before you came, can you remember what your ideas were about Britain and about studying in a British university. What did you think it would be like?
P: Uh, ... I have been here for one year. Last year I have been in Hatfield.
I: Oh, you have been here for a year. Yes, I see 2000. So can you remember what it was like then?
P: ... I think it should be according to the history, it should be ... the people in British should be gentleman and ...
I: What do you mean by that?
P: ... very polite and very helpful and very ... just like a very kind man.
I: So you thought British people would be nice.
P: Yeah, very nice because the way I think is she'll be like a grandmother! (laughs) Very kindly and always want to help you and care about you and look after you and such like this. And the environment should be very beautiful, very clean and very nice. And the buildings should be very ... it could be very old but also very beautiful. It seems that everything should be very good!
I: So you had a positive idea of what it would be like?
P: Yeah.
I: So how was it when you arrived? Was it the same or different from what you thought it would be?
P: Uhm, ... because first we arrived in the airport, the airport was very bad! Because the airport, the Pudou Airport in Shanghai is very new, and it is very, very, very good. And also I left my family and the thing is not good, so the thing is when I arrived after a twelve hour trip, I am very tired. When I arrived at the airport, the airport was very ugly and the light is very dark and everything make you feel not good. So I think the first appearance is not good when I arrived in England.

I: And were all the people gentlemen, polite and all?
P: Yeah, it is good. When we finish the like the visa and these things, we have to … a sign which said the University of Hertfordshire and just many people pick up to the university and they were very kind. The students there were very good.
I: So when you arrived the people made you feel very good?
P: Yeah. And also we have the orienting week and that day they introduced some things to us that were very useful to us. They helped us open the account in the bank and how to buy mobile phones—this is very important because when we have this our family can make contact. It is very useful. And also how to buy the Chinese food, and also TESCO and also take us to the London, Chinatown. So I think they are very kindly.
I: So your first impression was pretty good.
P: Yeah, I think they are very good.
I: How about studying? Before you came, when you were dreaming and thinking about coming to Britain to study, what did you think studying in Britain would be like?
P: Hmm… I think it should be different from China.
I: In what ways did you think it would be different from China?
P: Because I think the education systems are different. I think the lecturer will not always … because in China the teacher always should tell people what they should do and how to do and they will give the evaluate the students on what they have done. But in British I think there is some different. I think you study according to you and if you need help you ask the lecturer and I think the lecturer can help you. If you do not ask her, or you just do yourself, maybe the lecturer will not, I think they will not contact you themselves. It is according to you, dependent on you.
I: So is that what you thought before you came?
P: Yes, before.
I: How did you know that before you came?
P: Because we have the foreign teacher in university. The style, we know the style, they how they teaching method. It is very different because the Chinese teachers always tell you, you should finish this! You should do like this! But the foreign teacher will tell you, oh, you have done like this. What I think is that maybe you can do this thing and improve yourself. Just like this.
I: So they give you the choice, either you do it or not.
P: Yes, they will not direct what you have done strictly. The Chinese teacher will be according to their requirements, but the foreign teacher not according to their requirements, just according to what you have done and then they will evaluate it.
I: Hmm. Which style do you like best? Which do you feel most comfortable with?
P: … (long pause) For some, if I have no idea about this course, I think the Chinese style is good for me. Because just like something like computer or how to use software, maybe in my opinion according to foreign style, maybe they will not tell you how to do it. Maybe they will just say read this book, this book can tell you and if you find some problem, you can ask me. But if you have no idea about this you cannot find a problem, yeah.
I: So the Chinese style is more structured.
P: Yeah, yeah. But if something like … some course about business, because you cannot say something is always right about the business because it depends on the experience; it depends on the facts. So sometimes the opinion is right and sometimes it is not right, so I think the foreign style is right to learn this course.
I: so there are advantages and disadvantages to both ways.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay. Let's just backtrack a little bit because I haven't asked you about why you chose to come to Britain. You left university and went to work for a Swiss company and you worked for two years, and then you came to Britain to study. Why did you decide to do that?
P: Uh, when I was study in university too, I had already decided to go abroad to study. Why I came to England, the first thing is that I don't like American because it is very dangerous. It is not safety. And also if you learn business, it is better, I think it is better in America because the economic is dominated by America and it is very strong. You can learn something very new and always change so it is good for you, but it is difficult to get a visa. I think this is the main reason that so many Chinese students choose British or Australia. Because it is very, very difficult for us, especially for female to get an American visa.
I: And a Master degree is also two years study, isn't it?
P: Yeah, but … (tape changes sides and some is lost)
I: so you said you had already decided to study abroad, but why did you want to study abroad because it takes time, it is very expensive and all those things.

P: Because my father for his work has many chance to go abroad. He always tells me that if you can go out, you will have a good experience. You can see the world openly and it is very good for you. Also my brother said that the life in Japanese is not good, but he never said this experience is not good for him. It is also very useful for him, so my parents think it is very useful for me to go abroad. And they think their children always according to their parents, and that everything should be arranged by their parents. They showed them how to be like themselves, so it is a good chance for me.
I: So your parents want you to be independent, yeah?
P: Yeah, it is a good chance for me. It will help me.
I: But they suggested to you that you might want to go abroad and study.
P: I think, ... I also want to do it and they support me. I think it is good.
I: I understand. It is a decision for the whole family, isn't it? Because it is a big decision.
P: Yeah.
I: So you came last year, yeah? (Yeah) And you studied in Hatfield. Were you on the Bridging programme?
P: Yeah, Bridging programme.
I: Okay, so you are studying English mainly, and ...
P: Semester A is focusing mainly on the language and Semester B you have more chance to choose courses related to what you will learn in the next year.
I: so your experiences when you arrived and now since you have started on the MBA, over the past few months, you said had some ideas that things would be very different in a British university from your education in China, but in what ways have they actually been different? Have they been different in the ways you expected, or are there some other differences as well?
P: Mostly it is the same as I expected. And something is better, the equipment in the university is very good, especially the LRC. I not expected we could use the, when we do the presentation, we could use the laptop. I ... in China, I haven't expect this, but here we can use this. It is very useful. And in every room we can use the transparency. It is good.
I: So you think the resources are very good in the university.
P: Yeah, but about the Internet, it is not good. Because in my opinion we can connect to the Internet in my accommodation, but we cannot. We can, but it is very difficult. The line is only, ... they use the telephone line, not the lamp line. Should be a lamp line to connect to the Internet very easy, but in fact it is not very easy. You just go to LRC. The LRC, everything, is very good, but the accommodation is not.
I: Is not so good. (Hmm.) So you are in university accommodation, are you?
P: Uh, huh.
I: Okay. Have you made a lot of friends since you have been here?
P: Not a lot of. We have made some friends, but in the training programme most of the students are from China, but in the accommodation we can make some friends with some local students and also from some other countries.
I: So you have been able to make friends with some home students and also ones from other countries.
P: Yeah.
I: Do you spend most of your time generally with other Chinese students or most of it with students from other countries?
P: most of it with home students.
I: And home students have been very friendly and it has been okay, has it?
P: ... some of them. The problem with the British students is that they drink a very lot. They are noisy in night, especially at weekends, and also they don't know that they disturb others. They don't know. When you tell them could you be a little quiet, they just say why not join us. It is too noisy, but they cannot feel that what you think about this. Maybe they will think you are not open, you don't know what their life is like, you should join them. Sometimes there have some problem, but after this they always say sorry to you!
I: But what do you ... I mean it seems that your idea of being a student and a British student's idea of being a student is a different idea. Why do you think there is this different idea. You said that you don't go out drinking a lot and that British students ...
P: I think it is according to the culture.
I: In what way though? In what aspects of culture?
P: In China the parents always tell the children not smoke, not drink.
I: British parents do too! (both laugh)
P: But you know I have, last year, I have a part-time job in a Chinese restaurant. On the weekend I would come back there very late; it was about 11 o'clock and in the bus every weekend I can see so many old people and some parents and they come back from the pub and the bar, and they all seem to

drink a lot. Sometimes they will be with their children, so it is very ... It is a shock just like. I'm very surprised at this. In China if a parent likes drink, they will not take their children to go with them to drink, but the British people do it. So I think they maybe never mind their children drink or smoke.
I: So you think they drink and smoke more here perhaps.
P: Yes, because their parents, they always see their parents drink and maybe they will say why not we drink. Maybe it is a good thing, so ...
I: So it is a different example set by parents.
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Do you tend to work, when you are studying, do you work harder than the British students or not so hard or about the same, do you think?
P: Hmm, ... according to the course. ... it is very surprising that when we are talking about mathematics, many British students will be afraid of this course. Mathematics is very, very difficult for them. When we have a test, they will ask what test, and when you say a test about mathematics they will say oh, I cannot help you because the mathematics is very difficult. But in many Chinese students opinion the mathematics is very easy for them. So in this course, mathematics, they will work hard than us, but for something like ... and also like some course using the reading, maybe you have so many readings, then I think we should work hard because according to the language.
I: It takes more time.
P: Yeah.
I: What do you think is the biggest challenge for you in your studies now? What is the most challenging thing?
P: Firstly is the language, and second I think every student have these challenges is that they have no experience about this so it is very hard.
I: What do you mean? What sort of things do you not have experience that you found challenging?
P: Uhm, for example for the financial, I have no experience for the finance so I should read so many textbooks or articles about these in English version or Chinese version. The Chinese version is easy for me to understand but even it is Chinese version, even I cannot understand also.
I: So there are some very specific technical things that you have had to overcome.
P: Yeah.
I: What is the nicest thing you have experienced since you have been here?
P: Uhm, ... the nicest thing is I think I have go abroad.
I: Just being here is good.
P: Yeah, and I know this country and how it is like. And also I think I have learned something and I will learn something in the future if I want. If I try my best. And I think the things have meet what I expected.
I: Just one last theme really and that is talking a little bit about group work, had you done very much group work in China when you were studying in school and at university?
P: In China, no. Not, seldom, just when you do report, so if we have the same topic or same title about the report, then maybe we will work together as a group. We will exchange the ...
I: So does the teacher tell you to do that or just as classmates.
P: Sometimes the teacher tell us, and sometimes we just do it ourselves.
I: And what about here? Have you had much group work yet?
P: Yeah, in the Bridging programme we had group work. The lecturer suggest us to do some thing in a group because you can exchange information in a group. Because there is a limit for you to succeed. If everybody have idea in the group and there are five people in this group, then you have five idea, so it is good for research.
I: So do you like group work? How do you feel about it?
P: It depends on the members! (both laugh)
I: so sometimes it is okay and sometimes it is not okay.
P: I think almost all of the groups I like it. It's good.
I: Do you think groups have to have leaders, or can a group work without a leader?
P: ... the leader, you cannot say somebody should be a leader. I have a story. Just like some bird in the winter, or in the autumn, they will go to the south of the earth,
...
I: Migrate south.
P: Yeah, and they will fly like a V and it will be easier for them to fly because the speed of the cloud will ... like this it is easier to fly. But the first one is not the leader, it just depends, it just happen to be the leader. Just this bird happens to be at the head but then they will step by step follow this, follow this. So sometimes this person will not always be the leader. Sometimes if they agree with you, you

will be the leader. Sometimes another people have an idea and they will agree with this, and she will be the leader. So I think like this.
I: So a group doesn't have to have one leader. They can have many different leaders at many different times.
P: Yeah, but sometimes some people always have no idea. They are waiting for the other people to give them the idea, to tell them how he do and what he do, so I don't like this member, but some time if he can support you, support the work in the group, it is okay.
I: When you are working in a group, what is your feeling about how much you talk? Do you talk more than other people, do you talk less than other people, do you listen more? How do you behave in a group do you think?
P: I think it is depending on what the topic of the work is. If you have more idea about this, then you are talking about it more. If you have no idea about this, you should listen more to other people telling you about this. It is depending on your knowledge related to the topic.
I: So you have to bring something to the group that you already know in order to say something.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, okay. I understand. And just one final question then. In terms of the learning process, in thinking about learning, who is most responsible for the learning? Is it you, is it the lecturer? Who is most responsible for making sure that you learn?
P: I think in my opinion it should be myself because in the end you have learned something and the purpose is that you want to learn something. If the lecturer is very, very responsibility, but you haven't done something about this type of course, so you cannot learn anything about this class. So I think the key problem is depending on yourself.
I: Okay, okay. That is really helpful. Is there anything you want to ask me or talk to me about? Anything that you can think of?
P: ... no.
I: Okay. Maybe next time we can talk about things like assignments and so on. Okay, thank you very much. I'll just turn this off. Let me find the button.

27.11.01
UH Office

I: Okay, so how have things been going in the past month?
(lots of background noise in the corridor or in the next office making it a little difficult to hear)
P: So many course works!
I: Lots of course work. Oh, I didn't say, this is PT. (yeah) Just so we know for the tape who you are (laughs). So lots of course work?
P: Yeah.
I: How have you been feeling about that?
P: So many, just so many! We have to do so much reading and so much research and also I don't think these course work is valuable. For example, about the finance, we should analyze the finance theories. but I don't think we can analyze these finance just after several weeks. How can we find the evidence about that? So it makes it difficult to analyze that.
I: So you don't think there is anything to learn from your analysis?
P: Yeah, well maybe you can analyze one theory and then you can focus on one and find some interesting evidence, but the course work ask you to analyze several, maybe five or six related to the rate exchange theories. I want to learn something, maybe if it is focus on one theory, I can learn something, but it is too many, so ... but now I have just finished this course work according to the requirements of the lecturer but maybe finally I cannot learn anything about it.
I: So why is it too many? Is it too many because it would take too much work to do it well, or is it too many because you don't need that many? Why is it too many?
P: Because about the limit of the words; it is limited to 2,500 words. But I have found some reading about it, also the research about one theory is about 10,000 words. How can you just use 1,500 words to analyze so many?
I: You mean 1,500 or 5,500?
P: 5,500
I: Okay, that is the amount. Okay, 5,500. So because what you have been reading is very long, it has been very difficult for you to analyze it in a short way.
P: Yeah.
I: What ways have you used to do that?
P: I focus on... I choose three theories. First I comparing the past analyze about the theories and then I find some evidence, but I don't think my evidence can say something. But you know I should finish it.
I: So why is it your analysis can't say anything?
P: Because it is just, ... because the past analyze is, find some evidence for example from ten years or five years, and I just find some evidence just from one year or just some number, just some amount, so maybe it can say something, but I don't think it was to analyze it.
I: Hmm. Hmm. And you think it is very hard to take long articles and make them shorter.
P: Yeah, and also my classmates also thought it difficult.
I: Really. Well, how is everything else in life? We will talk a little bit more about your course work and all in a minute, but are you feeling happy? Are you feeling sad, frustrated, angry, homesick? How are you feeling?
P: Yeah, homesick. Of course I am homesick.
I: Of course you are homesick! You know I lived in China for three years and I was never homesick.
P: Really!
I: It was so interesting. I never had time to be homesick. Some people feel homesick and some people don't. So you feel a little homesick?
P: Yeah, I feel homesick.
I: What is it you miss about home?
P: Because last day was my birthday.
I: Oh, really. Happy Birthday!
P: Thank you.
I: So you weren't with your family.
P: Yeah, but my family called me. It's okay. You will feel homesick, but you should resolve it. You should get used to the life.
I: Okay, so you feel homesick and are you generally feeling a little bit sad and homesick, or are you feeling sad some days and
P: Not sad, not sad.
I: Are you feeling happy then?
P: Yeah, because my friend celebrate my birthday with me, so it is okay, yeah.

I: Oh, that's good. You had a party or you went out or …
P: We had a party at the accommodation, yeah. We had a dinner, a Chinese dinner, yeah.
I: And that was with all your Chinese friends, yeah?
P: Several were from Japan, all Asian.
I: Oh, right. So it was a good party?
P: Because you know some India or some western friends, they cannot eat the Chinese food.
I: Why?
P: Yeah, maybe they think it is not their style.
I: Okay, I suppose. I think they are missing out! Chinese food is very good.
P: Yeah, I think so. I want to let them try but no.
I: They didn't want to try.
P: No.
I: So you are feeling a bit homesick but basically you are okay. And you have a lot of course work for your study, yeah?
P: Yeah.
I: How are you feeling about the study? How are the classes and how is the experience of studying for your Master degree?
P: Hmm… some I think is interesting, but part of it I think is very boring.
I: So what is interesting and what is boring?
P: Interesting is just like the … the finance, I like it. Because it is new for me I can learn something. And for your lecture I also think it is … because I can understand and the hand out is very clear. But some hand out from the lecture is difficult to understand. They use some very strange words. Maybe sometimes you can use significant or very important, but there is another word, another word. I should put it in the dictionary and I see oh, it means important, that is significant. I feel it is very boring.
I: So when you don't understand you feel it is very boring.
P: Yeah, when you cannot understand maybe you cannot make, it cannot make it interesting.
I: and have you been doing group work? I know you have a bit for International Business Strategy but have you been doing group work for other subjects as well?
P: Yeah.
I: How has it been going?
P: Yeah, it is okay. We have to make an appointment and we plan to separate the part and I think it is… it will be okay.
I: Do you like this group work or how do you feel about it?
P: At the moment, you cannot say you like it or not. It is too early. We should see.
I: Okay, so what would you say is the most important thing you have learned in the past month?
P: Hmm… it is difficult to say. … (long pause) Maybe it is about the method to search or focus on the … for example, you will finish the assignment, and maybe you will … maybe at the beginning you will not understand it and you will search the information and waste time. I think at first you should ask the lecturer and find what he want you to do and then you can focus on the assignment and not waste your time. It is very important.
I: So you have been learning how to understand topics and how to find information?
P: Yeah.
I: When you are studying, when you have been doing your assignments, do you look for information on the Internet, in the library? Where do you find your information?
P: First of all I will find the textbook, because it will be more clear than the Internet or the journals. Because it is very general information, it will give you a general understanding about the topic, so then when you have a general understanding about the topic, then you can find some more specific, or more focus on the information from the Internet. The Internet is very useful. You can find a lot of information.
I: It has lots of information, but is there anything else you like about it?
P: … I think for the information of most use you should know what you should really need, yeah.
I: Hmm. So you need to understand the topic clearly.
P: Yeah, that is why I say you should read the textbook first, yeah.
I: and that gives you some guidance then.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, are there any disadvantages to using the Internet for information?
P: hmm… the amount, the quantity.
I: It is just a lot.
P: Yeah, but the quality, it is just depending on.

I: Yeah, how do you … when you are looking for information, how do you know this is good information and this is not so good? How do you decide that kind of thing?
P: … according to the textbook or according to the academic style of this reading and also from what area you found this information.
I: So the actual website.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay. So you think very much about the framework from the textbook and then you can look for information from there. Yeah, that seems a very sensible way to be looking for information.
P: Yeah.
I: Let's talk a little bit more about how you are studying in a general way. Is that okay? In a week about how much time do you think you spend studying?
P: Hmm… about … it's not including the lectures?
I: No, just in your private study.
P: … maybe five or six hours a day.
I: and is that the same on weekends as in the week time? Is that about the same everyday, or do you study more or less on the weekend?
P: A little bit more on the weekend, yeah, because of the lectures.
I: So you spend quite a bit of time studying, yeah?
P: Yeah, because so many reading.
I: do you study on your own always or do you study with friends sometimes, or
P: Part, part.
I: What is it you like about studying with friends?
P: … because you can share your information and share idea. Some times there is something that you cannot understand when you are studying and it stops your studying. You feel confused. Then you can ask your friend and they will give you some good idea, they will give you some guidance and it is very helpful.
I: so when you are studying with a friend will you just be talking to each other all the time or will you be studying on your own and then ask questions? How will you actually do that?
P: First, we will study alone and then we will ask about some problems and some ideas.
I: And when you are studying either by yourself or with other people, do you study in the learning resources centre or do you study mainly at home? Where is it you actually study?
P: … hmm sometimes in the learning resources centre and other time in the accommodation.
I: Is it half/half or is it mostly one or the other?
P: Mostly in the LRC.
I: And why is it you like to study in the LRC?
P: Because the study environment is good. If you are in the accommodation, sometime you want to listen to music or eat something or do something else. But if you are in the LRC, you can focus on the studying, so this is good.
I: So do you study in the LRC in the evenings as well as during the day?
P: No, because I live in the ……hall and it takes about 20 minutes. In the evening it is very cold and dark, maybe it is dangerous. On the weekend I will come here to the LRC.
I: And do you study with friends on the weekend?
P: Sometimes with friends because maybe I have a problem with the course work and we make an appointment at the LRC and maybe we can do it together.
I: So when you are studying by yourself, why is that? Why do you choose to study alone?
P: Hmm…because sometimes you should do some study yourself. If you don't then you cannot say anything about it. You can just listen to others ideas; it is not yours. Another thing is that you cannot compare, the two things or several things. Because first you should understand this, what you have learned and then maybe you can compare with what your friend has learned and it will help you.
I: So you study by yourself so that you can understand and they you talk about it with friends afterward, yeah?
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Okay.
P: You can do some summary or do some notes.
I: When you are studying on your own, what sort of things do you do? Do you read and think or do you …
P: I will take notes, yeah.
I: What kinds of notes do you take? You said you summarize things, yeah.

P: Yeah, some things that I think are very important so … some definitions about some specific topic, or some examples that give some evidence, or something that I cannot understand; of these I make notes.
I: Okay, so when you have got your notes what do you do with them? Do you keep them in a book or a file, or do you write on the book? I mean how do you actually record your notes?
P: I type into the computer; I have a laptop.
I: Oh, right. So do you keep separate files for each course or …
P: Yeah, for each course and for each subject.
I: And how do you, … say you have an assignment for finance or something, how do you take your notes and use them in an assignment? How do you do that?
P: Hmm… what do you mean?
I: Well, you do some reading and you get the information and write down some notes and things (yeah), the things that you learn from the information, how can you take them and put them into your assignment. Do you for example, do you print off the pages and read them and add in some quotations? Do you just write them down but then you don't need to look at them again, you can remember and just write them into your assignment? Do you look at your computer screen and move notes? How do you actually move what you have been reading and thinking about into your assignment?
P: First, I do the summary, and afterwards I will according to the summary I will do the assignment. Because if you are reading something and you write down something, it will make you copy. You know it is not good. If you have the general summary of all the information, then you can use it.
I: so you don't keep a hard copy, you just have your notes on your computer, yeah?
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, that must mean you spend some time reading things on your computer. Is that right?
P: Yeah.
I: And that feels comfortable and nice.
P: yeah, it is okay.
I: Okay. We have talked a little about group work. You have some assignments coming up now, don't you?
P: Yeah.
I: How many have you got to do now?
P: Ah… this week is the finance one and for this term I have a presentation for the marketing technology, and one essay for the marketing technology, and another essay for the International Business Context, so including the finance one, four.
I: So that is quite a lot, isn't it?
P: Yeah, and also yours.
I: And also mine. That is kind of next semester.
P: Yeah.
I: So how have you been able to plan your work? Have you started working on all of them, or will you do them one at a time, or do you wait until it gets nearer to the deadline? How are you organizing your work?
P: First according to the deadline. And also some course work should, … depending on your learning of this subject. Some times the lecture about this essay is not have this lecture so you cannot do this essay yet.
I: So you have the topic, but you haven't reached the week where you get the class that is about that topic. So you need to wait a little bit longer.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay. So compared to other people, you know you spend quite a lot of energy studying, do you think compared to other people you spend about the same amount of time as other people at the moment, or do you spend less time? Is everyone studying hard at the moment? What is happening?
P: Most of my friends are like it. Some of them spend more time than me because you know the MBA and MA are hard work.
I: Hmm. There is quite a difference between diplomas and degrees and …
P: And another thing I should say is the language is a problem. You should spend more time on the reading.
I: Hmm. Do you still … when you are reading to understand difficult language … and it is important to remember that academic writing is equally difficult for native speakers to understand. Even if you have a good vocabulary in English, I work as an academic, and sometimes I have to read an article three or four times to understand it clearly, to understand clearly what is going on. It is not that you have poor language at all; it is just that it is difficult.

P: Just in fact if the writer is American or Australian, this type of writer is very easy to understand. But if it is Britain, it is difficult to understand!
I: Yeah, I think there is something in that. But you have to think about what kinds of information you are reading because if you look at textbooks for example, textbooks are always easy to understand compared to articles. I have read many articles on subjects in business say from the USA and I find them very hard to understand. A writer will be writing for a certain kind of person to understand, a certain audience. And if an audience is going to be a big audience of students and teachers and so on, they will write in fairly easy language. If they are writing things that are for other academics and researchers and people who know a lot about the subject, then it will be difficult language. My guess is that you will have some textbook, some easier stuff and some stuff that is more difficult. It really does depend on what kind of information it is. Journals, journal articles, are often quite difficult to understand, but there is something about British language, British English being difficult. We write a lot of words.
P: Yeah, for the international business context, every class we must read the journal reading and it is very difficult to understand.
I: Yeah. Actually, you are not the only one who has said that to me. That particular course seems to be very difficult and it is because the reading demand a high level of understanding. And as I say that would be hard for me. It would be hard for anybody. You may feel that it is because your English is not so good, but that is not true at all. It is because it is really difficult language. And it is because it is written for a very sophisticated and knowledgeable audience. Journal articles can be difficult to understand really. So you are waiting really to get going more on assignments I suppose over the next few weeks, yeah?
P: Uh, huh.
I: Do you think it is all going to be okay? Are you looking forward to this or is it just a lot of hard work?
P: Then arrange time for another thing, maybe your report, or … so many things to do.
I: Yeah, just a busy time, huh?
P: Yeah, you cannot say you just wait for something.
I: Are you going to go away over the vacation at all, or will you stay here? What do you think?
P: Maybe stay here, or maybe go to London to do some shopping!
I: So you will have a bit of a holiday. Will you study or will you relax or …
P: I think we should relax!
I: I agree you should relax!
P: Yeah, because after Christmas it will be more harder, so you should relax.
I: Yeah, and have you started thinking about your dissertation yet?
P: Yeah. I'm thinking about it. I will write something about China's entering into the WTO.
I: Oh, right.
P: Yeah, it is a popular topic.
I: Yeah, I think so. Okay. Well, I can't think of anything else to ask you at the moment. I think that has more or less covered everything that I want to find out about. I am just interested in how you are feeling and what are you studying, so what I would like to do if it is okay is to set up an interview for just after the vacation. Is that all right?

(tape goes off… and comes back on)

I: Say that again for me. Say that joke that you have just heard!
P: Yeah. They said, … I forgot the name of the lecturer, yeah, but they say that maybe some time they do the assessment of the …
I: Oh, hang on, hang on. Nothing is happening, I don't understand.
(tape goes off and on again)
I: Nothing is happening. Oh, never mind. I guess it is not working.
(tape goes off a final time)

08.01.02
UH Office

I: So how are things this new year? How are you?
P: Ah, so far so good!
I: Did you have a good vacation?
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Did you travel somewhere?
P: Not travel, just stay here and do some shopping and met with my friends because last year I did the bridging programme so all my friends are living in Hatfield.
I: Oh, right. So you had the chance to go and see them.
P: Yeah, we meet for dinner and celebrate for the new year, yeah.
I: so you had a good time. Did you study at all?
P: Hmm… according to the LRC, if it opens, so I can get information, but when it closed, I think I can have a rest.
I: Okay. Do you want to take your coat off? You might get a bit hot.
P: yeah.
I: So you were studying in the LRC when it was open. But it was closed for quite a while, wasn't it?
P: About ten days.
I: So you just relaxed and had a good time and all that sort of thing.
P: Yeah.
I: Have you got many assignments due?
P: Yes! One for yours, one for Marketing Technology. We should set up a website, but this is very interesting course work. I like it. And one is about a finance case study. It is terrible!
I: Why is it terrible?
P: Because, how to say, … because this case study… you confused about the case study, everybody is confused about it.
I: What is so confusing about it?
P: Because we have a textbook and in that textbook they give some sample about the case study, but it is different. This case study is too simple.
I: Oh, really? Too simple?
P: Yeah, too simple, so we think we should have a complicated case study because it is too simple so we cannot … I don't know why.
I: So you think it is difficult because it is too simple.
P: Yeah, we think it is too simple.
I: Oh, right. Have you talked to the lecturer about it?
P: Yeah, but the lecturer said, you are businessman. I cannot tell you anything about it.
I: So you don't know if your analysis is correct or incorrect or anything about it.
P: Yeah, you should do many, many assumptions about it. Maybe if it is in this condition, I do like this way. If it is in another condition, I do it like that way, so because it is too simple. Since in my opinion about the finance, it should be complicated. It should be complicated, but this one is too simple, so you should assume so many things.
I: So what the lecturer is trying to have you do is use the case study as a first step to have you test out different ways of analyzing. Is that right?
P: In this case study it gives some questions, so I think the only way you can do this case study is according to the question.
I: Hmm. Hmm. So it is just too easy, not too easy, too simple.
P: Yeah, not too easy. Because it is too simple, it is difficult.
I: Okay, okay. So you said you studied when the LRC was open, so how many days would you say you were studying and how many days were you relaxing, would you say?
P: Half half I think.
I: So you feel okay, yeah?
P: Yeah, just okay.
I: Are you feeling a bit homesick at the moment or are you feeling pretty good about your studies? How are you feeling?
P: I feel it is just okay because last year I have already this experience, so it doesn't matter.
I: so you feel positive about it.
P: Because we have the Spring holiday, this is Chinese New Year in February, yeah the 16th, so maybe at that time I will feel home sick.
I: Aww. Maybe you need to celebrate with your friends.

P: Yeah!
I: So looking back over the last term before the vacation, what would you say in terms of your studies, what would you say was the thing you learned most? What was the biggest way you maybe have changed in the way you approach your study, or maybe you haven't changed at all?
P: Firstly is about the knowledge of a particular course and the second is the way because there is so many group study, and you should know how to communicate with other members of the group. Because some members, the way they study is different than you and how they manage the time. And how they manage their … how they can help you or how you can support them, so it is very significant.
I: So is that, I mean, is that difficult for you, do you think?
P: Some times it is difficult, some times it is not difficult depending on the member of the group. For example, for your course work, one of my group, he has a part time job so when another two of my group member think we should finish the group section before the LRC closed, but at that time, he had so many part-time job that he had no time to have a meeting with us, so we could not do it.
I: So you couldn't just go ahead with the rest of you; it had to be the whole group.
P: Yeah, so we separated the different part according to the individual section, so someone do the cultural part, and someone do the human resource and the environment. Just like this. And after the vacation we communicate and we will have a meeting today.
I: So you have had that or you will have it later today?
P: We will have it later. Because I and Linda, another group member, we have already print all the information and assembled all the information, but yesterday the other two, I don't think they have like this way. They just say oh, I have some information, but they don't do it like this way, they don't summarize the information. So we also need time to discuss it.
I: So how do you feel about that?
P: I think because you are doing a Master, you should be able to manage your time, so I can not say oh, it is not good because …. How to say? They are not children, so you cannot say something. You can just say please because this is a group study so you should give some support. You should do it.
I: So how can a group cope then if they don't? What you are saying is that not everybody in the group is working equally and given what you said that everyone is an adult and you cannot treat them like a child, how can the group respect each other but also make sure the work is done? How do you do that?
P: Hmm, at least I try my best. At least (knock on door—interviewer interrupts and responds to door)
I: Sorry about that. Now you were saying about how a group can maintain respect for each other and achieve the work. How can they do that?
P: Hmm… if you can, you can … first of all you should finish your work and do your responsibility and second you can say something about others. If they really cannot satisfy, so … I think you should say something about it because it is not only you and he or she but other group members, and maybe they can also help you. I think we can get rid of it.
I: So by talking about it …
P: Yeah, we can talk about it or maybe come to you to complain about something.
I: So you can talk to the external person.
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Okay, that is interesting. So in your mind group work is something you have learned about quite a lot in the last term.
P: Yeah.
I: so do you like group work?
P: Hmm… … you cannot say you like it!
I: So does that mean you don't like it?
P: Yeah, maybe I don't like it!
I: Why do you think you feel that way?
P: Because like this way, when I do the individual work, I haven't found some problem, yeah, but in the group work you can meet many, many problems! Because when you have an idea, you should explain this idea to other people, so … but there must be some advantage to the group because they will give you some ideas and they will help you when you cannot understand something and you can ask them. But I think it is difficult to do perfect work in a group.
I: So if you had a choice between working on you own and working with other people, you would choose to work on your own would you?
P: Yeah, first I would work on my own. If I cannot, I will … I think I will need some help then and I will choose to study in a group.
I: So you would… if you needed help when working on your own, you would go and choose the people you want to work with.
P: Yeah, it is depending on the work because some work must be done in the group.

I: What kinds of things? I know in the task I have set some things must be done in a group, but in other situations what is the sort of work you would go with other people to do?
P: Ah, … I think … something like a case study.
I: That is easy to work together in a group, yeah?
P: Yeah, but if you write some report or some essay, I think it is easier to do individual work.
I: Hmm. One voice, one writing and so on.
P: Yeah.
I: Hmm. I understand. Looking back on your studies, you said the first thing you learned was about knowledge of the subjects and the second thing was about group work in your study. In your independent study have you changed how you study from how you studied before or are you still studying in the same way?
P: Hmm… no.
I: No, just studying in the same kind of way.
P: Yeah, I think in the same kind of way. Maybe I just spend more time on reading.
I: Is that because of the course or is it because you like reading more?
P: Because of the course.
I: So you have more reading to do.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, and how about friends and relationships? You said because you were in the bridging course before, you have friends from that time. Have you made other friends on the course that you are currently studying?
P: Yes, some in the group, but most are Chinese.
I: Is that a good thing, or a bad thing, or …
P: I cannot say good or bad.
I: Why is that? Is it just because you can relax or …
P: Because if you have a problem or something you cannot understand, you will find some Chinese people because communication is very important and you do not want to use English. First you will find some Chinese people, but if you cannot you will find someone who you have already communicated with before, so I will ask the group member. Like this.
I: And why is that? Why is it you don't want to use English? Is it because your English isn't good enough or is it that you can't talk about the ideas in the same way? What is it about …
P: Just want to save time.
I: (both laugh) so it is quicker to talk to people in Chinese.
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: And it is good to talk to people you already know.
P: Because I don't feel, how to say, feel free to speaking in English. Because if you can you can get … first if you cannot understand it, then in English maybe you cannot explain what you cannot understand and some time maybe you can misunderstand of the other people. So first you will ask a Chinese people.
I: so always your first response is to talk to somebody who is Chinese.
P: But if you are already be friends with some other country's people, maybe English or other countries, then maybe I will ask them, yeah.
I: Okay, okay. What are you most looking forward to in the new term coming up? What is going to be most interesting?
P: Hmm… maybe the new course, yeah. And also finish the study.
(both laugh)
I: All right. So that is what you are looking forward to. You want it over and done already, yeah?
P: Yeah!
I: Why is it you are looking forward to finishing?
P: because I want to work.
I: You want to go out and get a job, yeah?
P: Yeah, because the last summer holiday, I went home and this is the holiday, so I stayed about more than two months in Shanghai and all of my friends were working. So yeah, I really missing the environment. Because I worked before and I miss this feeling, because you have so many things to do. I called them and ask do you have some time to meet and have some dinner, they always say I am always busy—maybe next week or next month. They have so many schedules, but I have … many time I am very free. I am just waiting for an appointment.
I: So you feel you are different from your friends.
P: Yeah!

I: Do you feel it is worthwhile that you are doing this study? I mean do you feel it is going to be helpful to you?
P: Yeah. When you learn something, you will be eager to use it. You will feel something like you are, maybe you think you are powerful and you want to use it. You want to show you are very useful and want to do something. It can give you achievement.
I: So in studying this programme you actually get more power.
P: Yeah, you will be more confident. Maybe I will think I am better than some people because I have learned so many things and I have the foreign experience, so this give you many, many confidence so you want to get achievement.
I: so in returning to this term, what do you think will be the most challenging aspect of your studies that you have to cope with?
P: Because the next term, the course will be more than this term and we will have the dissertation, so the study will be harder than this term.
I: So it will be a quite busy time.
P: Yeah, and I also have been thinking that maybe I can find a job here or go home, go back China, so I should think about it, and also about the visa.
I: So lots of practical things to worry about.
P: Yeah, but I know the first is that I should finish the study. I know that everything should step-by-step, yeah.
I: I think, I mean, it is quite understandable because this course is only for one year, so as the new year comes it is natural to start thinking about the future and so on. Is that common? Do you think all your friends are thinking about what is going to happen afterwards as well?
P: Somebody just … because these days there are so many course works to hand in and also exams, so they will think nothing, just the course work and the exams. Then maybe after it is finished, they will thinking about the future. But sometimes my friends, we are talking about it, what do you think about the future? And how about your course work in the next term? Something like this.
I: So people have some ideas about it, some thought.
P: Yeah.
I: So how are you feeling about this course work? You know there is an awful lot that you are preparing for, so how are you managed your time?
P: What do you mean?
I: Well, you know, have you organized it so that you do different pieces of course work each week or is it all towards the deadline? How are you coping with all the different course work?
P: Hmm…first depending on the deadline of the course work; second when I know I should finish this course work, then every course work I will read about it and know what should be done, so I give every course work a schedule. So you cannot say that just at this time, I have just done this one. Yeah. If something stopped me, something I cannot understand, then I will put it away and do another one.
I: When you are actually writing the course work, do you tend to write it well in advance, say two or three weeks in advance, or do you leave it until the day before or a couple of days before? When do you usually finish writing the work?
P: Normally, … advance several days, maybe about one week in advance.
I: And then do you look at it again and check it?
P: Yeah, I do. Because if somebody else have already done it, then maybe you can check with them to see whether what you do is right or not.
I: So you try to sort of take that approach when you …
P: I have never done the course work in just maybe one day! Because yesterday a classmate, as I said before we should set up a website, and today we should hand it in, and just yesterday, she began to do it. I am very surprised about it. She asked me to help her. I can help her but the time… there are so many things you should know, and you cannot explain it in detail. And otherwise you have so many things to do.
I: Is that only one classmate? Do most people prepare in advance like you or do others leave it to the last minute, do you think?
P: Hmm… many Chinese people they do just like me, but I saw many from India classmates, they just several days before this course work, they just start to do it. And for the finance management, the day we have class and the same day we should hand it the course work, there were less than half the classmates in that room, so the lecturer was very angry about it.
I: It happens all the time!
P: But in China we will not do it because we all have the examination for it, so you shouldn't not attend the class.

I: So the class has a connection to the examination and if you miss the class it makes it difficult to pass the exam.
P: Yeah, because when you ... because before you have this course, you have the handbook for the course and it tell you what the course work you should do. In China we never do like this. If you know what you should do and what you should be reading maybe people will not to listen to the class, so maybe they will ... because I know some people will ask others to help them. This is just like to copy, yeah. They never do this course work, just somebody pay for it.
I: Really!
P: Yeah, they pay for it, and they just pass and get the certificate. It is unfair! But in China, you cannot say they haven't these things, but less frequently because we have examination, and everyone must turn up for examinations. But if for your course it is just a report, then they can ask somebody else to do it.
I: Do you think group working helps to manage that problem?
P: ... hmm...
I: If you have to share work together? I mean I suppose the group, you know the whole group could pay someone to do the work for them, but it would be more difficult for one person to pay someone and say do this for me because all of the group would be working together.
P: But if in the group one group member, he doesn't do anything, but another group member, he is very shy. Because in Chinese culture we don't like to complain about it. We just think oh, okay he hasn't done anything, so we can do it, that is okay. So he pass it. So it is possible. There also has the possibility.
I: If you knew that somebody was paying another person to do the course work for them, what would you do about it? Would you go and talk to the lecturer? I mean here we are talking confidentially, that is a different matter, but would you go and talk to the lecturer?
P: No, no. I don't think it is a business with me.
I: Yeah, it is better just to keep quiet.
P: Yeah, it is his or her life. In the real life they will ... But you know in the real life, you also can ask someone to help you, so it is his problem. You cannot say anything about it because this is a real life. Even in the real life when you work, you can also pay somebody to do this. They have this relationship, this advantage, they can use this way, they have this style, they have this experience, so you cannot ...
I: but you have to do it in a different way because you don't have the ability to do that or you don't want to do it that way.
P: You know a different way and can also have the achievement, maybe you cannot do as other people, yeah.
I: Hmm... that is interesting. It is a bit worrying however, but an interesting thing.
P: Yeah.
I: so your main challenge for this year is that you have a lot of work to do and you have to get busy and think about how you are going to get it done. How do you plan to organize your work for the next term? If you have more courses and more things to do, how will you manage that process? Will you just have to work longer or will you have to work in a different way? How will you do things?
P: It should be depending on the course. At present, I don't know. Yeah.
I: So you just see there is lots more work, but you haven't thought how to cope with that.
P: Yeah, I don't worry about it because maybe in the future also have this condition maybe, maybe have more than this one. You should also try to solve it step-by-step and there are ways to do it. One is you can manage your time better or something like this, yeah.
I: Okay, okay. Well, I don't think there is anything else I have to talk with you at the moment. I just wanted to catch up with you on your course work and how you were feeling. Are there any other questions that you want to ask me about? Is there anything in general?
P: About dissertation.
I: Oh, yeah.
P: Because I choose my supervisor.
I: Okay, let's put the tape off and talk about this.
P: Okay.

28.01.02
UH Office

I: So this is PT.
P: Yeah.
I: And you had Management and Complexity today for the first time and you think it is very difficult.
P: Yeah.
I: Why do you think it is difficult?
P: It is talking about the scientist and it is talking about the complexity and what is the complexity interrelated to the scientist and the biography and it seems difficult and you should do some reading. And I looked up the reading list and no in the library.
I: Oh, really! Nothing is in the library?
P: Nothing in the library, nothing in the workshop.
I: Why is nothing in the library I wonder?
P: It all be borrowed.
I: Oh, so it has all been borrowed.
P: Yeah.
I: so presumably you will have to reserve things, will you. (yeah) So you are doing this with Dorothea Noble, yeah?
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, and you think it will be difficult. Well, you know I teach complexity and actually it isn't as difficult as you think.
P: Yeah!
I: You just have to relax because essentially it is just based around, ... I guess the reason Dorothea is talking about scientist is because in the 20th century there were changes in the approach to science and scientific thinking and a lot of what we think about in organizations connects to what we think about how science works and what science is. So essentially within the scientific community you can break down ideas about the world and how we think into two different ways: one is the old-fashioned way and is called the modern way actually, and that is the traditional way of thinking about facts and systematic analysis and systematic research and how science can prove a lot of things and can find out rules about how the world works and we can apply those rules in different situations; and the newer science, the newer way of thinking about things emerged after the second world war as people became more interested in knowledge like quantum physics and so on. Essentially their philosophy is that the world is actually very complicated and is complex in a way that makes it very hard for us to understand and therefore, we shouldn't spend too much time trying to understand the details because essentially the world is unpredictable. And so this whole discussion around complexity and thinking and organization is just based around two different ideas and two schools of thought. One school says that the world is a simple place and it is very predictable and we can find out a lot of information about it and we can use that information to enhance our understanding. And the other way says that the world is a very complicated place and the rules of science are actually too complicated for us to understand completely and it is always changing. It is unpredictable. So therefore, what we have to do is learn not to find the rules so we can follow a successful path by following through with the rules, but to learn to cope with and survive with uncertainty all the time. In essence the whole approach to thinking about complexity and complexity and management or to thinking about the different opinions that exist about organizational theory or what business is about boils down to those two simple things. A group of people traditionally thought that scientific experiments could give us a simple set of explanations that we could apply to our experiences of the world. And that was something that people used for a long time, but actually that has not been very effective. Traditional science has not helped us very much because it has its limitations. And the new way of thinking says the world is a complicated place and what we have to do is learn to live with complexity rather than try to make it too simple. The world is a complicated place, so if we try to apply simple rules to a complicated place, we will never be successful, we will never figure it out. The world is so complicated that we must just learn to live with that.
P: Yeah.
I: So basically that is the essence of the whole thing. It isn't as difficult as you think it is.
P: Hopefully! (laughs)
I: Hopefully, but some people explain it to make it sound difficult, but it is not difficult.
P: Yeah, the lecturer also said that at the beginning it all seems very difficult, and some people decided to leave, but finally they didn't, yeah. They feel they will pass it. But it sees you should know the

traditional science and what it is like and why did that affect you, so should do some reading and think of it.
I: Well, presumably the main textbook is Stacey, Strategic Management and Organizational Dynamics, yeah? By Ralph Stacey, yeah?
P: Yeah.
I: If you read that book, then you will be okay. It is quite difficult to begin with but actually if you read that, you will be fine because he explains it quite clearly, so just relax. Don't worry about it.
P: Okay.
I: Anyway, how are you feeling now about your studies?
P: Yeah, it's okay.
I: Yeah?
P: I finished with semester A and am beginning with semester B, yeah.
I: So you are feeling positive or tired or homesick or happy or unhappy? How are you feeling?
P: Hmm... I can say happy, yeah. Unhappy for the group study!
I: Why is that?
P: Because ... I sent mail to you, yeah, just these reasons because the members in the group no support from them, yeah. They just delay it and I don't know why. This is a Master degree, you cannot manage your time for a Master study in this way. Because everybody have this time, yeah, somebody can finish it, so they should finish. They should not just not finish and ask for an extension. Then what is the meaning of the deadline!
I: Hmm, well I agree with you but different people have a different orientation. You said that you don't like group work because of those reasons, but have you learned anything? Have you learned anything about working in groups, have you learned anything about human nature?
P: Hmm... this experience ... If I don't like this group, I should have said before. I should have told you that I don't like this group and I want to leave this group.
I: So why didn't you?
P: Because I think maybe I can do more. For the first section of the introduction, I do more; I give more information and help them, but they have the excuse.
I: so how will you work in groups differently in the future then?
P: Maybe like you said before, we should make an agreement. Everybody should do this.
I: So you set out the framework for the group's interaction first of all.
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Do you think working in groups like this teaches you anything useful for later on you know, for working in life or is it just a different kind of thing.
P: From my point of view, before the group study you must do individual study. You must do it! Everybody should do individual, then you can give some idea and exchange information.
I: So within the group people should do their own parts and then come together and try to work together.
P: Yeah, yeah. Otherwise, you have no idea about it. You are just waiting for others ideas.
I: So it is a combination really of individual and group work together.
P: Yeah, it will make someone feel it is unfair. I have just done the work and you haven't done anything.
I: Hmm. Hmm. So how about the rest of the assignments? How are you feeling about those?
P: Hmm... another group study is okay, yeah. Everybody support it and it feels better.
I: Why is that then? Was it the course or the assignment or ...
P: Maybe it is related to the culture. I find many India students they just ... if this work should be handed in tomorrow, then just start it today, yeah. So many India students like this, so maybe it is their culture.
I: so you think it is a cultural practice.
P: Yeah. But another group is mostly from European countries and maybe like us they can do it from the beginning, and many times before it is due. We have many time and we like to prepare for this course work. We make a plan and everything has a schedule and everything is according to this schedule and no member will be late for the meeting. And everybody prepare for it, prepare some information for exchange, so it is much better.
I: Okay. So the other course work how did it go, apart from group work? Do you feel satisfied or ...
P: Yeah, it is just okay.
I: And your marks have been okay so far?
P: Hmm... I got some A grade for some, one is for the Effective Management. We do the presentation and we should write your impression of this course. But the feedback for this course is just talking about the English language and how to use it, but nobody tell you what they think of your idea, whether

it is right or not and some reading you should do, or something like this. It is not just the language! It is not an English course you know!
I: So you weren't happy with the quality of the feedback. (hmm) But you got an A grade for that, so you feel happy about that.
P: Hmm, A grade, it is okay.
I: It is just okay?
P: No, I am not think I could get the A grade, but I get it. Some times I think I can get a good mark but I haven't got it!
I: But overall you are feeling quite satisfied?
P: Yeah, because I do so many work that I think I learned something from this, yeah.
I: What kinds of things have you learned?
P: Yeah, for example from the course work about finance, I did many readings about this, so it is useful. And ... I think it is also can benefit for future studies, yeah.
I: And does that apply to all of your courses that you are learning something you can use in your future studies or your future work?
P: Yeah, sometimes in finance we learn how to manage the risk so you can give some example just like the finance courses about why you should manage this risk or the political risk. You can connect them related to another subject, so it is useful.
I: So so far in your studies you are happy with the quality of study and you think it is a useful thing for your future.
P: Yeah, yeah. For example this weekend we have International Marketing and we have talked about the cultural issues and I have done the cultural decision making in International Business Strategy so it is very useful. I can have an idea about this topic. Yeah, you can relate what you have learned to the new course work.
I: And do you think that what you are learning will be useful in work later on?
P: Yeah, because sometimes when you haven't done this reading and gives you some model like SWAT, but if somebody haven't done, they have no idea, but you have some idea, yeah.
I: So it is quite helpful generally?
P: Yeah.
I: Okay. And how are you feeling about being in Britain at the moment? Is it okay? You know Spring Festival is coming and so on.
P: I think it is okay.
I: Just okay?
P: I have already adapt to it because I have been here already two years about, so it is no problem. Homesick ... sometimes I think you should be homesick. Yeah, I think you should be homesick because some ... for example somebody tell me they will go back to China in the Spring Festival, so at that time you are homesick, but it is okay.
I: So you are quite philosophical about it really.
P: Yeah, because you have so many things to do and the new semester is coming and there are many new course, so ...
I: So you are just really focused on your studies more than anything else.
P: Yeah.
I: Is there anything at all in the way of studying that you will do differently, apart from what you have said about group work, that you will do differently this coming semester compared to last semester? Will you approach things in a different way?
P: It depending on different subjects.
I: What do you mean?
P: Hmm... If ... Just like the complexity, Management and Complexity, maybe I should do some reading like this, but for example another course about International Business Forecasting, maybe you should do some case study of this.
I: So you are thinking about the detail of the subjects. But in terms of how you approach your studies and how you are studying, are you happy with the way you are studying and managing things?
P: Yeah.
I: Yeah? So you are quite content with the way you are approaching things?
P: Yeah.
I: What is the key challenge in the way of study for you? You talked about different types of reading, but what is the main thing you will ...
P: I think it is also about the group study, because maybe for some of the courses we should also do the group study and maybe there will be some Indian student as a member, so it is also still about how to connect with them.

I: So thinking about the relationships in the group.
P: Yeah, because in the future also I think it is almost all the group work, so you should meet the challenge of this—how to improve your ability of how to work in a group.
I: If you could change one thing in your experiences so far, in the courses, in the way of studies, in the situation—if you could change one thing to make it much, much better for you, much, much happier for you, what would you change?
P: Hmm… study?
I: Yeah, in terms of the way of study, the course, the environment of the university, anything connected to your studies—one thing that you could change to make your situation much, much better than it is, what would you change?
P: Hmm… I have to think about it!
(both laugh)
I: If you could.
P: Hmm… (long pause) Study is okay. … I think maybe the lecturers, the quality is more better. And I can learn more things and get a lot more knowledge and give some practice.
I: So you are saying the lecturers are important in your being able to study more things. So what is it when you say you want to improve the quality of the lecturers, what do you mean exactly?
P: Hmm… somebody the lecturer, … the presentation is what attracts you, so if it is not interesting, you don't want to listen. So it is very important. Because in the Semester A, I choose … it is about the Human Resource, the relationship or something like this. I think this course is interesting but the lecturer make you feel he is not confident with this. He is just reading and I cannot listen to him. I cannot hear anything, so I leave this one. It is very important.
I: So it is something about having a confident style, good presentation skills and …
P: Then you can think I can learn something from him or her, so yeah.
I: So it is not so much about the content, the information that they are giving. It is rather whether they themselves can communicate the information and communicate it effectively. It should make you want to listen.
P: It should give you some feeling that he have the experience, yeah. He can give you some interesting examples and then maybe you can think, if I do my best then I can be like this way. Maybe in the future I can be confident with this subject, so…
I: So what is the biggest challenge lying ahead for you? Thinking about things like complexity, it is a challenge itself, but what is the biggest challenge in your studies overall.
P: Because at the moment I have no idea about it, so this is a big problem.
I: So just the unknown is a challenge, yeah?
P: Yeah.
I: How about your dissertation? How do you feel about that?
P: Hmm…about the dissertation, … I haven't seen the man you … Ian Spurr. So maybe they give us the supervisor it is Terry Brigg.
I: I don't know him.
P: Yeah, maybe I should communicate with him, so I cannot say something at the moment.
I: But in your mind you feel comfortable.
P: Yeah, because this topic, I feel interested in it. It is about, you know, the WTO and the telecom industry, yeah.
I: so have you had any thoughts about what happens next after you finish? You have been here for nearly two years and you have been studying, so have you started thinking about what comes next, or are you focusing on your studies here and you will think about that later?
P: Yeah, I'm thinking about when I finish the study, do I find work here or just go back to China. I'm thinking about it. Because somebody told me it is difficult to find a job here, for foreigners, but also in China the competition is also very strong, so at the moment at least you should pass it. Get the degree and then you can think about it.
I: So your focus is on your studies.
P: Yeah, but some time you will think about it because somebody will discuss it with you and some time you will connect with the friends and my parents in China and they will ask you what you plan.
I: so you will just put that to the back of your mind for now and focus on other things.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay. Well, I don't think there is anything else I need to ask you at the moment actually. Is there anything you want to talk to me about?
P: Hmm, no.
I: No.
P: my grade for course work?

I: That will come next week. So thank you very much.

21.03.02
UH Classroom

I: All right, this is PT.
P: Yep!
I: How are you doing?
P: Hmm, okay.
I: Okay? Is that good okay, or so-so okay.
P: Good.
I: So you are feeling okay, are you feeling happy?
P: Yeah, everything is okay. Everything is under control, including my course work, including my dissertation. Everything is okay, yeah!
I: That sounds really good!
P: Yeah, this semester for me I think is better than last semester.
I: So what has made it better?
P: Maybe I have adapted to the way of study maybe, yeah.
I: What was it in particular when you are thinking of adapting to the study? Was it the time and management or
P: Yeah, time and management.
I: It is time. So what have you changed?
P: About the reading and listen to other people give advice, ask the people.
I: So you have been asking people their opinions.
P: Yeah.
I: Oh, right. So who have you been asking?
P: Some friends and also the lecturers. I ask them to make things effective.
I: And has their advice been helpful?
P: Yeah.
I: What sorts of things have they been saying?
P: They will give advice on read what. Maybe before I just searched for the information, but now they will tell you what information is useful for you and you save time, so it is very useful. And they will give you some … after you tell them what you have been reading and what you have been thinking, they will give you the feedback, yeah.
I: Oh, right. So that is very helpful, isn't it?
P: Yeah.
I: So why didn't you do that last semester? Why didn't you talk to the lecturers last semester?
P: Just I don't know. I have not compared these two ways, and then I just asked and it is useful, so I will use this way.
I: So you just decided to talk to the lecturer and you …
P: Yeah, and I found it was helpful, so I will do it again.
I: Is there anything else that you have done that is different?
P: Hmm, no.
I: You said the timing was different and the management, what is better about that? What have you changed? Are you starting earlier? Are you organizing your time in a different way? What have you done?
P: Not earlier. I always started early but this time maybe not early so much. Because if early so much, at that time you have no idea about the information, so it wastes time. So when I have some idea, I will start to do this course work.
I: So you have waited until you have some understanding, and then you have started your course work.
P: yeah.
I: And how is the rest of life? Are you enjoying your experience here?
P: It's okay. Hmm… I plan to travel in the Easter holiday.
I: Oh, right. Where are you going?
P: Maybe just in the UK, York.
I: Oh, York. York is beautiful.
P: yeah, it is very beautiful and I have been there last year. It is very beautiful. And maybe Bath, and Cambridge.

I: Yeah, Bath is nice and Cambridge.
P: Yeah, some friends, we will borrow a car.
I: Oh, really.
P: Yeah, they say it is cheaper.
I: You mean to rent a car.
P: Yeah, only 120 pounds for a week.
I: That is pretty good. So somebody has there driving license and all that?
P: Yeah, they have it.
I: Well, good.
P: Yeah, for a week.
I: Okay. So life is feeling pretty good, and you feel on top of your course work. Have there been any difficulties or challenges that you have had to work with?
P: For the Complexity. (laughs) At the moment I know what it means, but for me, I think it is difficult how to use the complexity theory to your experience, because my experience is not so complexity!
I: (laughs) You have a simple experience, huh!
P: Yeah! Because I just only have two years work experience. I know the reality and uncertainties are so complexity, for me it seems not so useful, but you should know. And I don't think it is important, but for the course work, you should relate it to your experience to indicate how important or useful it is, so this is the challenge because I have no experience.
I: So it is just how to understand how to make ideas of complexity fit your own life.
P: Yeah.
I: And to interpret your own life.
P: Yeah.
I: Yeah, I can see how that would be a challenge. I think the way to look at it from my point of view is that complexity is just a different way of looking at experience that you have had. It is not about saying you may have had complex experiences or simple experiences. It is about saying you will do things in different way if you think that life is simple and is a problem that you can solve, or you think that life is very complicated and there are some things that we will never fully understand. It is just a different way of looking at the same thing, so you can look at your life, at whatever has happened, from the point of view of rationality or from the point of view of complexity. So it is like having different spectacles to look through. Here are my rational spectacles and I see things in a certain way, and here are my complex spectacles and I see things in a different kind of way. You see differently from a different point of view, yeah.
P: Yeah, yeah, yeah (many times throughout the above explanation)
I: So how about the dissertation?
P: I have start researching, about searching desk research. I finished the proposal and my supervisor said it is okay, generally okay. So I have just started according to the proposal.
I: And you have got a supervisor and you have met them and it is going okay?
P: Yeah.
I: How do you feel about the challenge of the work?
P: Because I want to do the interview with the companies, and because it is Chinese companies so only by mail or possibly by phone, so maybe it is not ... If I can make the face-to-face interview, it is better, but now it is just by mail.
I: It is difficult, isn't it.
P: Yeah, it is difficult.
I: But in terms of how you are approaching it, you feel confident about it? You feel happy about how it is going? I know generally you are feeling happy, but do you think oh, this is such a big thing. How do you feel about it?
P: Hmm... I think I feel confident about it. I have read so many information about the telecom industry and I am focusing on the mobile telecom, so it is a good thing; it is interesting. So I think it is no problem.
I: That's really good. You are feeling very confident about life!
P: Yeah.
I: So since we last met, looking back over the time you have been here and looking at things from where you are now, what is the most important thing that you have learned. What is the most useful thing you have got out of your experience? You are nearly at the end of your Master degree, so what is the most useful or important thing that you have got.
P: I want to say at the beginning, in Semester A, at that time I worry about my study a lot. Because in China I always get the good grade for the course work, but the first one for here was only a C, so I really worry about it. I think maybe it is my language or something else, but after the second or the

following course work, I get A and B and this give me confidence. I think oh, my study method is good, so this give me confidence. Confidence for study I think is very important.
I: So because you got good marks, that is something that helps you feel confident, and therefore, you have been able to study.
P: Yeah, if not it makes you always worry about it and think is this right, maybe not. And when you lose confidence, you don't want to ask somebody else. You are just focusing on this and don't know anything outside yourself.
I: But in your mind, what is the difference between a C and a B or an A. I mean why is there such a big difference between those things?
P: Hmm... this is the result. I think this, maybe this means nothing, but for me I think it means what you have learned. And this is your work, why you have done it. Everything you have done you want to get the results and if you only get a C or D, it ... sometimes I think I haven't done anything because only this result. So if you get A, you think ah, this is my work and it is excellent.
I: Is there... I mean outside of the grades is there anything that you have learned that isn't reflected in the grades. Is there something, ... is there anything you get from any of the courses or from your studies that is important to you but has no connection, is not shown in the grade you get, or is everything you learn shown by the grade?
P: No, not everything can be shown in the grade, but some part.
I: What kinds of things are not shown in the grade?
P: Hmm... sometimes depending on the feedback from the lecturer. Sometimes I think maybe it is not,... for example, maybe I get A but I don't think I can get A. But according to the feedback, maybe I am not satisfied with the feedback because it never give you the advice, how you can improve yourself in the future. No. Or sometimes they think just the language you use or how to do the reference maybe it is not useful to really what you have learned from this course work. They don't, how to say, they don't evaluate what you have learned from this knowledge. They don't evaluate what you think is right or not right, so this is not ... I am not satisfied with this.
I: Okay, so sometimes the feedback you get from lecturers is not as complete as you would like it.
P: Uh, huh.
I: What about other things? Is there anything that you have learned that is not represented in anything connected with the assignment? Are there things that you have learned through your experiences of being here that have no connection with grades or feedback from the lecturer, but things that you know you have learned but you know they are not shown in that kind of formal way through assessment?
P: ... for example, the group work experience maybe, or the ... Because maybe I have learned this course work in International Business Strategy and now I am studying in International Management, and I can connect these two courses, so I think this maybe can not related to the grade.
I: So in your mind there are maybe things that help you to understand.
P: Yeah, yeah. You can connect what you have learned, all the theories, all the knowledge and you can use for the other things, yeah. I think this is important.
I: Okay. So what has been the most fun thing, the most enjoyable thing that has happened in the last few weeks?
P: Hmm... no!
I: You haven't had any fun?
P: Fun?
I: Nothing that has been enjoyable in your study or ...
P: You mean study?
I: In study or everything. Is there something fun ...
P: Oh, my friends send some toys to me from China!
I: What kinds of toys?
P: A rabbit, yeah. It is a lovely rabbit. Yeah, this one and also some friends from Hatfield came here and we were chatting. We haven't connected together for several months.
I: so in your studies do you expect to enjoy yourself, to have a good time, when you are studying, or ...
P: Yeah, yeah! I do.
I: But you say you haven't had fun? I said what's been fun and you said "no".
P: You said the most... I always try to find the fun when I study because I don't want it to be just boring for me. I want to be relaxed and even if this is maybe hard work, but I want to try to be relaxed for the study. Yeah. You know for the business some reading should be fun for you. We have done the case study about the Virgin about the Southwestern, some times when you search for the information, and you have learned so many things about this company, some things must be some fun for you. It is the interesting.

I: Okay, so looking at the other side, what has been the most difficult or the least fun? What has been the worst thing that has happened?
P: Hmm... for example just some... according to so many datas that you should analyze. You should check so many tables and graphs and do the analyze and draw the conclusion, maybe this is no fun because so many details.
I: Hmm, so you are not interested in the details.
P: Uh, huh.
I: But generally, do you think that ... Have you learned a lot or have you learned a lot or have you learned things in your course of study so far that is useful?
P: I think complexity this one. I know some theories about this. Before I don't know this management, this complexity and management and now I have an idea about this one. And also the strategy of management, you can have a structure of this, this structure of management perspective, and ... I have the Japanese management, so you can know what the Japanese management is like, so it is very useful. And ... also for my dissertation, I have an idea about the global telecommunication industry.
I: So you have learned a lot of knowledge about new subjects.
P: Yeah.
I: Are there any other kinds of things that you have learned or learned in a different way, I mean not in the terms of knowledge, but other things that you have learned?
P: ... no, maybe no.
I: What about maybe your skills or whatever. I mean some of your colleagues have said, well, some have said I haven't really learned anything at all. Some have said I haven't really learned much from the courses but I have learned how to work to a deadline, how to write an essay in English, how to do different kinds of things like how to organize their time.
P: But this is involved in every step of my study. You know how to improve your language, how to improve your skill of writing the essay or report or something else. This is not just at this step. It is throughout. You know how to writing, also in Chinese or other language, it is not just for the Master degree. It is all your life, these things.
I: Yes, so you have continued to learn, but it is nothing special that you have learned from your Master study.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay, okay. Now I know that you have to get ready to go in a minute, but there was one question that I wanted to ask you and I've just forgotten what it is... Oh, I know what it is! If you had the opportunity to change one thing in your study life that would have made your studies here much better, much more effective, if you could change one thing that would improve things for you, what would that be?
P: Hmm... everything you mean?
I: Of your study life, not your personal life. If you could change one thing to make your studies even more effective, even better than they have been, what would it be?
P: The lecturers.
I: The lecturers, why would you change that?
P: the reputation maybe.
I: What do you mean? Explain.
P: If the lecturer is very famous, I think I can learn more, a lot of knowledge, not only knowledge but maybe the experience. Yeah, if I can, I think maybe I want it to be like this.
I: And in your whole life if you could change one thing to make your experience here to make your whole life in Britain at the University of Hertfordshire better, what would you change?
P: change the place, not here.
I: What do you mean?
P: Well, in a new place, it is a new environment and a new life, so ...
(interruption from what sounds like a lecturer—tape goes off for a time)

I: So you would change the location, yeah?
P: Yeah, so it was better!
I: What would make it better?
P: ... a good environment.
I: What do you mean?
P: I mean everything better! People... because here something like boring. Because no shopping, no shopping centre here, and no cinema here. ... just
(interruption again and tape goes off—nothing seems to come on again after one minute of tape)

10.05.02
UH Classroom

I: So how are you doing?
P: Generally happy.
I: Well, that's good! Why so happy?
P: Because everything is under control! (both laugh)
I: What's under control? Study or life or everything?
P: Everything. General things. Yeah, about study. The dissertation is okay according to the proposal, everything is finished according to it. And the study is hard but I enjoy it. And the life, ... it is okay.
I: It's okay.
P: Yeah, because some problem with my neighbourhood. They are very noisy! Some new member moved in and they are very noisy! I and another neighbourhood, we complained about it so many times to the accommodation office, yeah.
I: Really. Why are they so noisy? Is it because they are first year students or is it because it is the end of the year or ...
P: No, they are not, just second year. I don't know. They like chatting and all night chatting! I don't know why, and another American boy, they are always with somebody watching the TV. Maybe it is about some football match or something and they always cry out, crazy.
I: So when is this? Is it during the night time or in the evening? When is it?
P: In the evening and sometimes all night.
I: Really, so all night long.
P: Yeah, so it is very terrible and we complained to the accommodation office! The assistant in the accommodation office, they knew us!
I: What have they decided? Have they done anything, or ?
P: They tell them and write a letter to them, but you know the semester is almost finished, maybe only two or three weeks, so I think it will pass.
I: Hmm. Do you think it is because ... well, people should be preparing for exams now.
P: Yeah, so we are very surprised about it! Why they have so much time for these things!
I: Maybe they don't have many exams. If they are second year students, maybe they don't have many exams.
P: Maybe, we don't know.
I: Yeah, you see some second year students will be on a four year degree. So first year, second year and then they go out to work for one year and then they come back again into the third year. So maybe they don't have many exams at the end of the second year and they can relax and they are thinking oh, we are going out and going to work, to take a job, and then they come back from work to study for their third year.
P: But we haven't friend in the second year, but we have some friend in the first year and the final year and they have so many examinations. But when you tell them will you please be quiet because it is too late, but then ...
I: It doesn't make any difference.
P: Yeah.
I: So you have spoken to them.
P: yeah, we spoke to them. The accommodation office said we should communicate with them because you are in a group, so we communicated with them and they said okay, but the next time they did it again.
I: so they are not in your apartment, they are just on your ... because you live in an apartment, don't you?
P: In a flat.
I: So they are in your flat?
P: Yeah, and they never clean the kitchen room! It is very dirty.
I: Yeah, sometimes that can happen. It can cause all sorts of tension. Oh, dear. So life is just so-so in the flat, yeah?
P: Comparing to the other things!
I: So study is okay, difficult but you are doing okay.
P: yeah, I think.
I: How are the courses this semester? Have they been all right?
P: Yeah, I am very satisfied with the results.
I: Well, that is good. What kind of results have you been getting?
P: Almost all B1 or A3.

I: That is pretty good! You should be satisfied. And have you had to work very, very hard in order to achieve that or have you just figured out how to do it now?
P: Yeah. I have figured it out, so that is why I think if I work very hard, the results should be like this. but I think I do not. I just according to the requirement of the hand book, or ... yeah, like this.
I: So what is the technique? What are the tricks, the techniques for getting good marks? What is the way that you would suggest to somebody else?
P: Hmm... I think ... because I think somebody haven't got the good mark because sometimes they never attend to the lecture, and some times they don't know what is the lecturer really talk about. Because sometimes they will ask me how to do the course work and I explain to them, and I find some simple question, they even don't know. And I will suggest them how to ... according to the question, you should find some key words to this question and how to read the related knowledge, ... some reference to it, I will suggest it.
I: So what you are saying is to do well you need to go to the lectures and try to understand exactly what the lecturer says...
P: Yeah, and the important thing is that before you attend the lecture you should read some related information about it. You should know some background to the lecture.
I: and does that make it easier to understand what the lecture is all about?
P: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it is very helpful.
I: And when thinking about writing answers for questions or your essay, you sit down and you actually saying okay, what does this question say and what are the key ideas here. You just look at the question hard and break it down, do you?
P: Yeah. For example, for the case study, first you should know the background of this company or the background of this case study and then make the question. Something like ... analyze for this company and then search for more detailed information related to this question, and then from that you can ask some question to the lecturer. Yeah.
I: Yeah, okay. Is this a skill, this ability to focus on the information and think about it, is that one of the things that you have learned in the past year, about how to study in Britain? Is that one of the things you have learned or did you know that anyway?
P: Hmm... sometimes you should know before you sort out the problem, you should know the background. At the beginning you should know. But how to get the information immediately, or fast, or quick, this should be improved step-by-step. So you cannot just get it or thought of it immediately. You should do some practice, yeah.
I: Is this the same kind of way you would think about your studies in China before you came or is this something you have learned since you came to Britain?
P: Hmm... Yes.
I: Which.
P: Because in China I really know somebody who is really excellent, but here unfortunately, I haven't find some UK student or some foreign student that is very excellent. For example in the group study, in China we would separate this work, and someone would do this part and someone would do this part, that is why we need the group work. But here for the Costing case study, we should do some calculation and get the figure for ourselves, but the figure doesn't tell you anything. Maybe we can do this calculation and someone else can do the analyze, but they don't want to do like this way. They are just waiting to get the figure from the calculation, then can do the other things. Because in this group, there are some other Chinese students and we talk about it. We are very surprised. Why they cannot separate things in different parts and do it at the same time.
I: Uh, huh. So what are you saying? What I was asking about was your approach to the study, you know, and how you think about the background information, and focus on the key points and you break the question down. Is this a skill that you have developed to help you in the British way of learning or is it something that you were doing already in China and you just brought it with you?
P: Just as I said before, it is not in China or in British. If you study, you should do like this way. Maybe in the Chinese because ... how to say... just like when you were in high school, you were maybe like this. but it was not good because maybe the technique for search for information is not good. But in the campus you also do like this way but maybe you know how to find the key words, you know you should find the key words, but maybe in the university you know how to find the key words quickly.
I: Okay, okay. So it is not specific to a context. It is just about being a good student really.
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Okay. And what you are saying about the approach to group work is that the approach that you have experienced here is that people are interested in kind of doing the work together instead of splitting the work up, yeah? And you think splitting the work up is more effective?

P: Yeah, that is why we need the group work because if you do it by single, you haven't enough time, so we should separate it.
I: Uh, huh. But when you separate it out, how can you bring it all back together for the whole group, because the whole group needs all of the information at one stage, don't they?
P: Hmm, I mean not just separate, maybe for this part we will separate and then after we will finish it, then maybe we will discuss about it.
I: Oh, okay. So you break the work apart and then bring it back together again, and that is something you feel students are not comfortable with here.
P: Hmm, yeah.
I: Okay. Okay, that is interesting. One of the things actually to do today, because today is probably the last day we will have a good chance to talk, is to sort of reflect on the whole of the year. So what is the most important thing that you have learned? What is the most important thing you have got out of your experience here in Britain?
P: It should be related to the course, the MBA, all the subjects of this.
I: So it is about knowledge.
P: Yeah, it is about knowledge.
I: Has this experience been really important for you? Has it been effective for you, or has it been, well it hasn't really meant very much.
P: Because I haven't had a chance to practice it so I don't know if it is effective or not, but I think it is important.
I: How about being in Britain? Is that something that is effective to you, important to you, or hasn't it meant very much?
P: Hmm, I think this should be important or good memory.
I: So it is a memory. Has it changed you at all as a person?
P: Yes, because before I came to the Britain, I haven't lived alone. My parents looked after me, but here everything you should do by yourself, so I think this should improve the life skill, yeah.
I: So learning how to manage money and do laundry and cook and shop and all of those kinds of things has been very important, yeah?
P: Yeah, yeah.
I: Is that a very fundamental, a very important change in you, or is it something that you would have just done if you had been in China or if you had been in Britain, it doesn't matter?
P: I don't know because maybe in China I also … because … you know this age 24, 25 is just like the change, the key point in your life, so maybe in China also and other things maybe… maybe I will not work in Shanghai but go to another city, maybe this, but I think here … because here is the overseas so you know maybe … I don't …
I: What is different about being overseas?
P: Because if I am in Beijing or another city but still in China, you know everybody is Chinese and no problem with the language or the cultural or something like this, but here … it is different culture and language and also the study, so I think in this situation you can get through it. If in China you also can get through it, so yeah, it is important.
I: It is important but it is not very different. There are some different things because of being in a different culture.
P: Yeah.
I: does it make it more difficult if you are overseas, or does it make it easier or better? Because some people I have spoken to said for example when I came to Britain I knew I had the opportunity to be completely free and be independent and be who I wanted to be and do what I wanted to do. Other people have said when I came to Britain it was much more difficult because since I was so far away from my family, there has been nobody to talk to about problems and it has actually been more difficult to become more independent because I have had to do it all by myself. So some people have said it has been very good and easy to be overseas because it helps me, and others have said that being overseas is more difficult because I'm so far away from everything that is familiar. How do you feel about that? Is it easier or more difficult, or the same?
P: Hmm… not so difficult. I think it is depending on the personality, because if you are very, how to say, active, there is no problem. You can find friends. Once you have friends you can talk with them. If you just have something, be alone, you will be not happy. So I think it depending on yourself, not just the place, yeah.
I: Okay, so it is about your personality, not where you happen to be.
P: Hmm, I think so.

I: Is there anything in particular, is there anything different that you have learned or have you changed in any way, by being in Britain, or would everything been just the same if you had gone to another city in China?
P: Hmm... ... not really something different.
I: so the main value to you in coming to Britain is really the knowledge you have acquired, the subjects and the MBA, yeah?
P: How to say, ... things just like I know, for example if I go to there maybe this way, maybe the speed, here maybe I can improve the speed, but there I can also go but the speed is different. Like this.
I: So the path is the same, the changes are the same, but it is more quickly, yeah?
P: Yeah. Yeah.
I: Why is that important or is it important?
P: The important thing is that you can be there quickly!
I: Why does quickly matter? What is important about quickly?
P: Because you want to be there. Because how to say, maybe ... because maybe when you are a child, you want to be excellent, but maybe here you think, yeah, I am excellent, be quickly because I am oversea and in this place, and before I come here I haven't any idea about this, and now I'm happy with it and I have adapted myself to it, so it makes me feel I am more excellent.
I: So you have more confidence.
P: Yeah.
I: Okay. Okay, that is quite interesting. But would it, ... for example there are many foreign universities in China now that are teaching foreign degrees, including British degrees, would the same thing have happened do you think if you had been studying for a foreign degree in Britain? What I guess I'm trying to identify is have you got anything out of being here that makes it worthwhile to come to Britain instead of staying at home in China. Because what you have said so far is okay, you have changed a bit more quickly maybe but what has happened to you, what you have been through is the same as what you would have experienced in China. So I guess I'm trying to understand whether your experience here has been valuable. You have spent a lot of money. You have taken a lot of time. You have been through many things. Was that worthwhile or would it have been just as good to have stayed at home?
P: Hmm... how to say? I think it is worth, because for example in China, for example the language, if in China maybe you can study with foreigners or something but here you have to talk with the foreigners because everywhere here ...
I: Because you are the foreigner here!
P: ! But for myself I should adapt to here, to this place, but if I am in China I know it is my place.
I: Yeah, okay. So there is something different about studying in Britain as opposed to studying for a British degree in China and that is about context.
P: Yeah. Hmm, yeah. Another thing is that it is about life. Maybe in China, yeah I want to go travelling oversea, but it is difficult for me. If I am here, it is easy. Yeah. You get the student visa and if sometime I go to Switzerland, I don't need the visa. But if I am in China, if I want to go to the oversea, I need the visa. But here it is easy.
I: so there are practical things that make it easier to be here as well.
P: Yeah, some things.
I: Okay, that is interesting.
P: And because really you spend so many money, so you think something should be worth it.
I: Well, that is what I am trying to understand. What is it that makes it worthwhile? It is quite possible for someone to say I've spent all the money and I've been here all this time, but actually I don't feel I have gotten anything that is different. Maybe it has not been worthwhile for me.
P: That is why I say it is depending on the personality. You should be active. If you want something, you cannot just waiting for it. If you do nothing, then you get nothing. Yeah.
I: what has been the best thing—I know I have asked you similar questions, but—over the whole year what has been the best thing about studying here?
P: The best thing? ... hmm, it is difficult to say what is the best thing!
I: Okay, so what has been the worst thing?
P: The worst thing? ... maybe is about the group study. For you class, it is really a bad memory. I will say and so many Chinese students will say, I will not work in a Indian student in a group, no, never! So maybe it is the worst thing.
I: And that is just about cooperation and understanding and so on?
P: No, no. Because ... I don't want to say like this, but they are really lazy. I don't know why they are like this way, but in my opinion, they must show their high education quality. So how can they like this way? No.

I: Did you ... I know we talked about it before, but out of that experience, is there nothing of value that you learned? Did you learn anything about how to manage group work, or work with other people at all, or was it just a waste of time and difficult?
P: Hmm... some times I think, yeah, I know how to do group work with people, but some time I still don't prefer this. It is depending on the members in the group and also depending on the course. Some times you are very lucky. You are in a group, a good group, but some times you are in a bad group. The opinion is changing!
I: Hmm. So it depends on the people?
P: Yeah, depending on the people.
I: Okay. If you were in the situation where you have to give some advice to somebody from China, from your hometown that is coming to Britain to study, what advice would you give to them about two things: first of all, about how to live well in Britain; and second of all about how to study effectively? First of all about how to live well, what advice would you give somebody who was coming here?
P: About how to live well? ... about living there are so many things!
I: Such as, what kinds of things do they need to know?
P: For example, about ... how to say? Okay, if I am a student who will study here I want somebody to tell me about it because I want to find a part-time job, and is it easy? I will tell them it is easy. Then how to find a part-time job—go to the student union, they will suggest you how to find it; they are very helpful. And if you like travelling, then okay it is also very easy and also go to the student union; they will suggest you. Something like this. And if about the study, I will tell them be confident. Don't worry about language. You can be excellent. And you can ... at first the mathematic, any Chinese can get A for mathematic. And for the something about writing also you can get good mark. The first thing to show is that you be confident about this. And another thing should do like ... it depending on what course you choose. If MBA, I think ... because I cannot tell them you should work hard or you should study hard, because some of them, they never study hard! They ask somebody to help them do the course work and they pass it. Some times I think it is unfair, but maybe it is the real life. Because in China, you cannot because for any course work you should have the examination. You should pass it and the examination is not open; it is never open book. So you should prepare for it. But here the examination is open book and if not examination, you can ask somebody to write it.
I: But...let's just talk about open-book exams for a minute because what you are saying is quite interesting. For open-book exams you don't have to prepare and anybody can just kind of cheat—that is what you are saying, yeah?
P: Yeah, because they will tell you what question, they will give you eight questions and in the examination you should choose three, so you can prepare for it. But in China, especially in the campus, the lecturer will say nothing about it.
I: But doesn't it mean for that type of examination, ... first of all, you say you get the questions all in advance, but were the questions exactly the same in the examination?
P: In general.
I: so the themes were the same, but were they exactly the same?
P: Hmm... if you really prepare for it, I think it is the same.
I: Because one of the things people often make as a mistake for open-book exams, is that they prepare an answer and then they literally just copy the answer in the exam. And usually with an open-book examination, the questions are a little bit different and that little bit of difference is where you score really good marks. So it depends on the type of design of the examination, but traditionally an open-book exam is not testing what you can remember; it is testing if you know how to use information rather than whether you can remember information. It does different things you see.
P: Yeah, I know. What I mean is that you can ask somebody, but on an examination, you cannot.
I: Yes, yes. And so what I think you are saying is that a bad student with a little help from his friends can get a so-so mark. They can pass it.
P: Yeah, they can pass it. I don't think it is a good or effective way to test or examine the student but it make the education difficult so it will be more valuable, but here I think that even if you are sometimes stupid, you can get the education.
I: What is the difference between someone who is stupid and someone who is intelligent? Because doesn't it take a kind of ... don't you have to be a bit clever to make a relationship with someone and say will you help me and then think about the question and prepare work. Isn't that kind of clever?
P: yeah, that is why I say maybe this is real life, maybe. In the real life, you can if you know how to get, to build a good relationship with people, then they really want to help you. So maybe he is very clever. Yeah, he is clever.
I: Different clever though.

P: Yeah, they know how to use this ability to build the good relationship with people. If you don't know this maybe you are stupid in this point. So this is the real life. Sometimes you think it is unfair, but life is like that, so …
I: So in terms of offering advice to people, in terms of life you would focus on how to travel and how to get visas and how to get work and those types of things, yeah?
P: uh, huh.
I: And in terms of study, it would similarly be on a practical level.
P: Yeah, I just give advice on these general things because people are different. Maybe I think this is really terrible thing, and they don't think it is terrible. Or maybe they don't think it is difficult. Something I think is easy, they don't think is easy. So I can just suggest something that is general and no more.
I: What advice could you offer to help people prepare their minds, their attitudes or their way of thinking to make them ready to come to Britain to study?
P: Yeah, I will tell them there are so many Chinese students here, so don't worry! (both laugh) and you know now there are so many Chinese students who study abroad. in UK or in German, because now it is very difficult to get the visa to study in the United States, they all transfer to Britain and Australia or something. For Chinese it is very easy, something like be a tramp, yeah. People all do these things, so I think sometimes they really don't worry about these things. Because there are so many people who are doing these things, so why should I worry about it.
I: So because there are so many people it makes it easier, but also because so many other people can do it, then I can just relax because if so many others can, then I can. I don't have to be a pioneer.
P: Yeah, because so many people do it! Maybe in the future people nobody will think, oh, you get the overseas education! It doesn't make things different.
I: Okay. Well, just before we finish, what is next? What happens after your study?
P: Hmm… I don't know. Because I know it is difficult to find a job here, maybe I will try, but if I do not find a good job here, I will go back to China to find a good job.
I: so you are not planning any more study or anything.
P: Not in detail, but first I should finish the dissertation and then I will focus on these things. Now I know in China I can find a good job, yeah.
I: so you are feeling quite confident about the future.
P: Hmm… not at the moment. I just don't want to worry about these things. I know it is not very easy for me. You can say you have the higher education but you don't have the related experience, if I am the employer I don't want to hire a student. Maybe they get a degree but they have no experience. So I think … I know some people in the big company in China, yeah, and they should introduce me. Some people should believe you, think that you can do it. Yeah, so that is why I think in China guanxi is very important!
I: Is guanxi important in Britain?
P: Hmm, no at the moment I don't find it.
I: No, so your relationships to people don't make any difference to what happens to you?
P: hmm… at the moment no.
I: Okay, that is just interesting. Well, thank you very much. It has been very good to talk with you.

Appendix Eight: Follow-up information about participants

WS: Accepted for doctoral study in the UK; did not complete studies - now working in computing in the UK.

PT : Returned to Shanghai to work in management consultancy

HLG: Applied for an additional UK Master's programme

YMX : Studied translating in UK university for one year; now living with Uncle in Edinburgh (working in his restaurant)

QWY: No information

CD: worked in UK in restaurant and as a cleaner for 1year+ after completion of programme; no current information

YB: no information

LG: returned to China after leaving UH in January 2002; was working in Ningbo until April 2004; recently made redundant and currently looking for work.

XJ: No information